

The background of the cover is a light yellow-green gradient. It is decorated with several stylized, light green leaf motifs that appear to be floating or falling from the top left towards the bottom right. These motifs are scattered across the entire cover, with some appearing near the top and others near the bottom.

# **WOODROW WILSON AND HARRY TRUMAN**

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**Mission and Power in  
American Foreign Policy**

**Anne R. Pierce**

 **Greenwood**  
PUBLISHING GROUP

# Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman

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*Mission and Power in  
American Foreign Policy*

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ANNE R. PIERCE

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# Introduction

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A rich and fluid tradition in American foreign policy includes evolving ideas about America's special "mission," its "unique" status, its proper role in the world and how to put power in the service of that mission without tainting the mission itself. Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman are a vital part of that tradition, which stems to the nation's origins. They saw the protection and invigoration of the civilization in which the American way of life is rooted as their consummate task.

The United States was founded on certain principles which they and other presidents have been obligated to acknowledge and respect. Although those principles have been refined and sometimes violated, these changes have never been undertaken lightly, without fear of political and moral consequences. The promise inherent in the American founding remains compelling.

Our tenacious early foreign policy principles were these: We believed men everywhere had a right to self-government and that legitimate government rested upon the consent of the governed. We stood against militarism and colonialism and against "entanglements" with militaristic, colonial powers. Of course, we would associate with those powers when it was necessary for the improvement or preservation of our republic. Three recurring themes, however, kept us from unnecessary involvement. One was the caution against corrupting ourselves and our democratic institutions through becoming bedfellows with a despot or a tyrant. Another was the idea that we would grow more, not less, powerful through avoidance of the power struggles of Europe. Competition among the European powers, their constant leeriness of one another, would give us the freedom to prosper and grow. The third was that it was not our "right" to impose good government on others. Because just government rested upon "consent," it was up to the governed in other countries to decide when and how to institute

“new modes and orders.” Instead of imposing our way on them, we hoped our experiment in democracy would set a shining example, an example so compelling that the world would peacefully be drawn into our fold.

Insofar as the United States had a mission, it was this: Rather than engage in wars of conquest or greed, it need only stand as a paradigm of liberty, democracy and justice. We were to be one nation in which foreign as well as domestic policy was to *include* the consideration of what is right.

I emphasize the word “include” because it is a mistake to assume that our mission was the same as a system of morals. Rather, the definition of our mission *included* the consideration of power. Early American statesmen believed that our power would be enhanced *through* our mission, qua abstention from the power struggles of Europe. Moreover, the founding principles included *within themselves* provisions for our security. Social Contract Theory, as reflected in the Constitution, held that the primary duty of government was the preservation of its people. The government could not protect the rights of individuals if it could not protect their very existence. Hence, any foreign policy decision had, *in principle*, to include the consideration of power. In addition, the founders realized that no foreign policy decision could be made on the basis of principles alone. Prudence had to be used to determine whether and when a given principle applied to a given situation, which principles pertained at a given moment and how those principles might be modified when the security of the nation depended upon it.

The stance of our forefathers was not mere “isolationism,” nor did it arise from “naivete.” The adoption of a federal Constitution indicated their realization that our fledgling republic needed a government strong enough and a country united enough to withstand pressures from Europe. Moreover, foreign trade and diplomatic relations were priorities from the start. As Walter Russell Mead puts it, “It is no coincidence that of the first nine U.S. presidents, six had previously served as secretary of state, and seven as foreign ambassadors.”<sup>1</sup> Our economy depended upon foreign trade, and the development of our nation required diplomatic finesse. From the Jay and Pinckney treaties to the Louisiana Purchase, American leaders revealed a savvy concern for our position on this continent relative to that of the Europeans.

Still, it must be emphasized that early American leaders did not see American power merely in terms of territory and wealth. They believed in the revolutionary potential of *American ideas*—in their potential to change not only the politics but also the power structure of other nations. Indeed, if the world were to emulate our example, this would be a victory not only for our mission but also for our power. Both Woodrow Wilson’s and Harry Truman’s foreign policies were underlain by a determination to realize the revolutionary potential of American ideas in a less passive way than originally envisioned.

The context of the American tradition is often the context within which the public comes to understand or disagree with a president’s policies, and it is often the context within which those policies are presented to the public. This context is, then, a very legitimate part of studies that focus upon the “real

world." American principles have had an enormous impact upon the American view of the world and upon American behavior in the world. For example, would the Vietnam War have seemed such an outrageous extreme to so many Americans if they had not been taught that self-determination, the peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in the internal politics of other nations and the general concern for individual rights were an essential part of American identity? The American people, even if inadvertently, have used recurring American ideals to react and respond to the events of American politics. It is, then, important to look for continuity and tradition in our history. They are to be found readily in the ideas which mold and restrain the policies of presidents, and which presidents use to explain and justify their policies.

There is, of course, the approach to the study of politics that doubts any idea a political leader espouses on the grounds that that idea is "inevitably" self-serving or "biased." It is true that presidents' stated ideas must be scrutinized within the context of their actual policies and their underlying goals. The point that I would make is that the context should not be allowed to overrule the ideas unless it makes sense to overrule them. For example, if a politician says he or she is doing something which will raise the living standards of most of the people, when, in reality, it lowers them, it is requisite upon the writer or researcher to point that out. On the other hand, if a politician defends a policy on the grounds that it is "principled" or "within America's best interests," it is requisite upon the writer to discover *why* he or she described that policy as such and not to *assume* that this description was merely a ploy to rally the people. We can misrepresent ideas as much by being overly skeptical as we can by being overly believing.

A twentieth-century trend perpetuated especially by left-leaning interpreters of American politics sees any moral arguments in support of American foreign policy or, for that matter, any non-economic arguments, as mere rationalizations for economic motives. This led William J. Williams, for example, to regard Theodore Roosevelt and "men like him," who expounded a geopolitical and ideological view of American imperialism in the 1890s, as incapable of understanding the truly *economic* nature of American imperialism. (We will see in Chapter 1 that this is an inadequate and simplistic view of the "American imperialist.") It is the trend to assume that where lofty ideals are combined with acts "tainted with selfishness," those ideals are mere "excuses" for those acts. The trend is, on the one hand, to look beneath the surface of those ideals: We doubt the sincerity of those lofty motives. On the other hand, the trend is to accept the surface phenomenon: Surely an act which *seems* selfish is just that. Clearly, we should not blindly believe everything that is said in justification of American policies, but neither should we blindly ignore it. The ideals to which policymakers continually refer must be taken seriously.

Having said that the American tradition needs heedful attention, I must add that I do not agree with those works which impose a single theme or idea upon American history without allowing for discontinuity and change. Various historians and political scientists, most notably the "consensus historians," have

viewed American “exceptionalism” as a determinant in our thinking and as a deterrent to a sensible foreign policy: Richard Hofstadter, Louis Hartz, George Kennan and others have suggested that American isolationism and American internationalism are two sides of the same coin: One chooses to ignore the outside non-liberal world. The other chooses to deal with it, but only insofar as it is molded to become liberal like us. Although I agree that the tendency to see the world through the guise of our own liberal values has at times caused us to ignore the unique aspirations of other peoples and, at other times, to neglect the exigencies of power, I disagree that the American mission is one unchanging idea that we passive Americans have been appropriated by since its inception. Can Hartz be sure that Americans are simply appropriated by the liberal ethos or is it possible that they propagate it and adapt it to the present because it works for them?

Consensus writers seem to be appropriated by their own preconceptions. For example, Sakvan Berkovitch’s idea that the American Revolution, the Civil War, the imperialism of the 1890s and the women’s movement are all minor variations of a singular middle-class scheme is underlain by *his* assumption that the only change which can truly be *called* change is one of class struggle. The fact that Americans agree over a middle-class way of life can only be seen as a consensus regarding America as such if class is the only way by which we account for our identity. If other factors are viewed as equally important, the changes in our past can be recognized *as* changes.

A similar academic trend places the entire span of American foreign policy within the confines of paternalism, parochialism and racism. As an example, Michael H. Hunt argues that American ideology is dominated by the denigration of other cultures as “backwards and malleable.” Hunt is skillful in arguing that ideology, not just geopolitics or “realpolitik,” *matters* in the conduct of foreign affairs, and in making the connection between America’s “active quest for greatness” and the *idea* of promoting liberty. However, he sees that idea as driven by “racial views.” Stating that other countries have been “similarly ethnocentric,” he submits that “Americans were hardly unique”:

Gripped by ethnocentric impulses of seemingly universal force, Americans used race to build protective walls against the threatening strangeness of other people and to legitimize the boundaries and terms of intergroup contact. Moved no less by exploitative impulses, Americans followed other “master classes” in employing racial attributes to justify subordination of “inferior peoples,” whether as black slaves, Indian wards, or Filipino subjects.<sup>2</sup>

In order to make this interpretation of American ideology stick, Hunt must downplay or ignore these essential facts:

1. The constitutional guarantee of the rights of individuals, as opposed to groups, has drawn more diverse races to this nation than have been drawn to any other. It is often because of the group-oriented politics of their native lands (which allowed them to

be categorized and discriminated against) that immigrants have flocked to the United States.

2. "Comparative history" leads to the undeniable conclusion that most other nations, across time and space, have been more "ethnocentric" than the United States. Attempts by Germany and Japan to create a "superior culture" and a "dominant race," the "ethnic cleansing" and human rights abuses carried out by "socialist" and totalitarian governments from Africa to Eastern Europe to Asia throughout much of the twentieth century and the ongoing religious and racial intolerance throughout much of the world provide a counterpoint to Hunt's argument.
3. America's very real failure to perfectly embody democratic ideals—whether through early tolerance of slavery or through later support of authoritarian regimes for no other reason than that they were anti-communist or oil-producing—does not lessen the potency of the ideals. Indeed, our recurrent ideals were *used* to fight slavery, to reject the "imperialism" of the 1890s, to argue against unjust wars and to prevent our occasional propping-up of dictatorships from becoming broad policy.

In a book against racism, Hunt criticizes the "mindless anti-communism" of our policies toward China and the Soviet Union, both of which have committed large-scale ethnic atrocities. Where, in his analysis, is mention of Stalin's mandate to "liquidate the Kulaks as a class" and to send "bourgeoisie intellectuals" (with all Jews being categorized as such) to death or concentration camps? Cambodia's cruel classification, torture and purge of all non-communists is similarly ignored. While focusing on U.S. hubris in the 1970s and 1980s, Hunt avoids what Paul Johnson calls the "dismal fact" that "during the 1970s, and 1980s, the policies followed by Russia and its Cuban, Ethiopian and Indo-Chinese satellites added around 12–15 million to the world total of displaced persons: not unworthy of comparison with the horrific statistical achievements of Stalin or Hitler."<sup>3</sup>

As Johnson aptly demonstrates, it is leftist states—not democratic states—that have in common with terrorist states and groups "the Marxist habit of thinking in terms of classes instead of individuals." From isolated acts of terror to the tragic catastrophe of September 11, 2001, we see too vividly that this habit leads to horrific inhumanity. Johnson points to middle eastern radicals who have kidnapped Westerners as an example:

Young radical ideologues who kept their victims, usually diplomats or businessmen chosen solely by occupation, chained in tiny, underground concrete dungeons, blindfolded, their ears sealed with wax, for weeks or months, then dispatched them without pity or hesitation, *did not see those who they tortured and murdered as human beings but as pieces of political furniture.*<sup>4</sup>

American individualist ideals have become a cogent weapon *against* those who would categorize entire groups of people in order to justify terrorizing them.

Too often, American ideology is seen only in terms of its underlying motives and prejudices. To be seen fully, that ideology must also be understood in terms

of its overt ideals and aspirations. What ideals are the most dominant, recurring and representative of the nation's self-definition over time? Since its independence, America has defined itself as a guarantor of the rights of individuals and has described those rights as inalienable. Moreover, as Tony Smith asserts,

Since its independence, and especially after the settlement of its continental frontiers in the 1840s, the leitmotiv of American foreign policy has been its support for the creation of a politically plural world order, that is, a community of sovereign states opposed to imperialism and pledged to mutual nonaggression.<sup>5</sup>

In downplaying the universal principles which have inspired American ideology from the beginning, Hunt and others fail to see that American ideas contain the "seeds of destruction" of the race-based ideas which *they* emphasize. The revolutionary words of Thomas Paine remind us of the revolutionary standards which have so often been employed by Americans to judge and change American political practices:

O! ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been haunted round the globe. Asia and Africa, had long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.<sup>6</sup>

A failure to recognize change in our history would allow politicians to hide behind the rhetorical guise of upholding America's mission without defining what they mean by it. The acknowledgment of change prevents us both from clinging to an idyllic past and from rejecting the past altogether under the pretext that in order to improve, we must destroy. One of the fascinating things about Wilson and Truman is the extent to which they combined respect for the past with bold and innovative policies.

Related to the tendency to see all of American politics in one uniform light is the larger tendency to simplify ideas in order to categorize them. Just as this tendency allows some to view American politics in terms of a monolithic theme, so it allows others to see American politics in terms of neat dichotomies (a phenomenon both Wilson and Truman warned against). Perhaps the most persistent and recurring of these dichotomies, in spite of criticism against it, is that between idealism and realism. This dichotomy tends to be used in various ways.

One usage opposes the ideatic or subjective to the "real" and "objective." In this usage, realists are those who appreciate the "facts," facts being objectively valid (i.e., scientifically verifiable). Idealists are those who formulate "mere opinions" regarding the unscientifically verifiable (i.e., the good and justice). Those who adhere to this dichotomy, which denigrates idealism, are often only willing to discuss justice, for example, insofar as they treat it as a fact, not a

value: It can be objectively observed that this country has this particular view of justice, that country another. It is a fact that country A defines justice as B. These people are willing to describe what a particular society defines justice *as* but, being tied to the scientific method, are unable to attempt a definition of justice itself or to make value judgments regarding a given society's actions. (Accordingly, they admonish American policymakers to be "value-neutral" toward other countries.)

Those who believe that only facts and not values are "true" sometimes nevertheless accept values as things which society "needs." But if the good is need, why is it good to fulfill needs? Moreover, if there is no such thing as better and worse, what makes the scientific method better than others? By what criterion does one judge the scientific method itself? As much as objectivists try, they simply cannot escape the notions of better and worse, right and wrong.

Objectivists, who are in this case "relativists," tend to see the fact that there are so many different opinions regarding abstract things such as justice as evidence that there is no way to determine which opinion is true or better. And yet, the fact that people don't agree on the truth need not mean that there *is* no truth. It could just as easily mean that some people are more capable of grasping the true (i.e., regarding justice) than others. It could just as easily mean that some countries have moved further toward a just society than others. Too frequently, we mistake consensus for truth.

Criticism of the way in which objectivists reject ideals need not and should not have resulted in the retaliatory rejection of reality and facts. The ongoing attempt to determine the *accuracy* and the *rationality* of ideas and statements is essential if we are to enjoy the expansion of knowledge. Unfortunately, this attempt has been nearly ruined by both those who insist upon making facts "fit" into grandiose theories *and* by those who insist that there is no such thing as fact: by those who insist that truth can be found only in deterministic undercurrents of history and by those who insist that everything is a mere product of culture (i.e., cultural bias). Both the former ("structuralists") and the latter ("poststructuralists") have in common their placement of *theory over fact*. They rejected objectivism only to come up with a dogmatism of their own.

Structuralism, spearheaded by Claude Levi-Strauss and Noam Chomsky, took positivism to the illogical conclusion that "human attributes and laws were governed by laws in a way analogous to the way scientific laws governed inanimate nature."<sup>7</sup> Free will and the decisive acts of individuals in history were discounted. We were instead to look for linguistic conventions and "codes" which define human culture regardless of human choice. As Keith Windschuttle points out, structuralism is actually anti-empirical, "denying the real world in favor of the theoretical world," discounting facts in favor of sweeping explanations of history.<sup>8</sup>

Poststructuralism, spearheaded by Derrida and Foucault, seeks to demystify individual acts and written works by exposing the structure of language, ideology and culture to which the supposedly independent actor or thinker is *bound*.



As Windschuttle observes, this version of relativism provides an excuse to downgrade “research” in favor of immersion into the cultural perspective of others. We can look only at what a time and place means or meant for them. Since the person doing the immersing is himself hopelessly immersed in “perspective,” the result is not knowledge but simply a glimpse into that culture’s meaning as internally defined. He laments, “We now have cultural and literary theorists insisting that it is *only* meaning that matters.”<sup>9</sup>

This adds an intriguing twist to the fact–value distinction. The theoretical approach ends up in the same place as the objectivist approach: Whether we insist that there is nothing but facts or that there is nothing but meaning, we are saying that nothing meaningful can be said to be true!

This turns history into a futility (which, of course, is why it is necessary to discuss it here). History pursues truth about the past, and uses both empirical evidence and the criterion of rationality. The historian draws on an expanding body of knowledge, taking it seriously while attempting to contribute to it. The “evidence” combined with careful, logical thought might lead historians to refine or elaborate on the historical narrative; at the same time, it can lead historians to modify their own previous assumptions. Recent skepticism toward truth and knowledge has led to the rejection of history as a discipline and of rational inquiry as its appropriate method. Skepticism is stirred by the fear that claims to truth are nothing more than a pretext for narrow-minded “bias.”

Upon closer examination, however, it is history as theory that most encourages bias. Explains Windschuttle, “The crucial but unsupported premise of this argument is the claim that what historians consider important is determined by their values.” This in turn, provides historians with an excuse to resort to fiction, since fiction is inevitable anyway: “One of the most disturbing developments is that some historians have thought it is now permissible to invent some of their ‘facts’ and to introduce into their works passages that they acknowledge are fiction.”<sup>10</sup>

This is not to dismiss new approaches to history, but rather to insist that they be well founded. For example, the approach to history that studies entire “cultures” and includes literature, language and custom within a holistic approach is valuable. It is the merging of this approach with relativism that is problematic.

Related to the ever more convoluted distinction between facts and values is the distinction frequently made in the analysis of foreign policy between what we “have” to do and what we “ought” to do, between the “necessary” and the valuable. Realists are those who look at the facts and “see” what has to be done, as if facts could speak for themselves. Idealists think in terms of ideals—not in terms of what has to be done but in terms of what *should be*; thus the distinction between those who live by ideals and those who do not. Although it is obvious, it is helpful to point out, as Wilson did, that all political activity rests upon ideas. This simple fact helps to undercut the realism–idealism dichotomy, for then the distinction is not between what we have to do and what we ought to

do, but rather between who has the *correct* ideas about what we ought to do and who does not. Who has the best ideas, in turn, can be evaluated on the basis of *prudence, principle* and *accuracy*.

In this sense, the realism–idealism dichotomy *is* sometimes valid. In the sense of being impractical, imprudent or naive, certain ideas can be labeled “idealistic.” Others are “realistic” (i.e., they make sense). Wilson and Truman strove, at least, to undercut this dichotomy, for they considered both the moral worth *and* the practical consequences of their actions. Moreover, they are interesting for the extent to which they tied America’s self-interest to its moral interests. Their assessments and decisions were based on their firm belief in the inseparability of America’s mission and power.

Why, then, do so many sophisticated analyses tend to imply that one was a realist and the other an idealist, or, at least, that one was a moralist while the other was a pragmatist? I believe the answer lies in the lack of serious and thorough studies of the presidents’ own ideas based on a serious and thorough look at their speeches, correspondence and writings (as understood within the context of their policies). This lack also explains why there has been little or no attempt frontally to compare Wilson and Truman. It is only by looking closely at their own explanations for their policies and their own admonitions regarding American traditions and principles that we see the striking similarities, and hence the interesting comparisons between them.

The tendency to see policy decisions in either-or terms accounts for gaps within the literature about each president as well as the huge gap in literature based upon comparison. For example, writers tend to see Wilson’s postwar treatment of Germany as *either* lacking in sufficient provisions against future German aggression *or* as a giving in by Wilson to the Europeans by agreeing to a peace treaty that was too punitive and harsh. In reality, Wilson’s postwar policies toward Germany suffered *both* from an inadequate attention to the post-war power situation and from inadequate provisions for the recuperation of the suffering Germans. As we shall see in Chapter 6, it was Truman who pointed out these inadequacies. Wilson’s own speeches and writings reveal his struggle to balance European-style punishment of aggressors and American-democratic magnanimity. This is one small example of how listening to a president’s own explanations for his policies can provide useful insights into the evolving American tradition. It is also an example of how a comparison of presidents can shed light on that tradition, and it is, once again, a warning against seeing that tradition in terms of a simplistic or invariable theme.

Similarly, it has too often been assumed that the advent of active American participation in European geopolitics which occurred during Truman’s presidency stifled or halted the flow of ideas regarding America’s mission and its original principles. It is as if there can’t be both the continuance of those principles and the reevaluation of our position in the world. It is as if geopolitics and high ideals cannot exist at the same time, and yet, their coexistence is nothing new. Only if the provisions for flexibility in our early principles and

the early admonition to do what is necessary for our security are forgotten can we view recent engagements in power-politics as *opposite to* our original ideals.

The "transvaluation" of the terms we have used to define recent American foreign policy has stemmed partly from the more harsh and extreme nature of the choices the United States has had to make as a powerful member of the modern world: As it became a world power, its responsibilities increased. As two world wars compelled it to compete with other nations and ideals, its mission was tested and strained. As Soviet-inspired communism became of paramount concern and active geopolitical strategies became essential, we had to choose just how far we would go and what methods we would use to "contain" communism. Some were tempted to reject geopolitics altogether in search of a more simple, pristine world. They abandoned themselves to an effusive and impractical "moralism." Others were tempted to do anything and everything to increase the United States' power. Even if the reasons they gave for their actions were "missionary" (i.e., the struggle of the "free world against the opponents of freedom"), a disregard for methods stands glaringly against the fundamental regard for human rights. A contest arose between those who reminded us of "ideals" and those who reminded us that we now live in the real world. Power thus became juxtaposed with our original mission.

To move us away from this dichotomy, it does not suffice to remind us that our mission *depends upon* our power in that we must first stand (our geopolitical position must be secure) before we can enunciate that which we stand *for*. The very notion that our security comes prior to our self-definition can provide an apology for the abuse of power; an apology for doing simply anything, using simply any methods, in pursuit of our security. But, if we do simply anything, we negate the very reason for doing anything: that we stand for what is right. Hence, again, the divergence between power and ideals; whether it is thought of as a principle or as a tenet of realpolitik, the recent pursuit of national security can and has led to a kind of involvement in the world which has complicated our mission.

In spite of the way in which, in one form or another, the dichotomy between mission and power has seemed to force itself on us and to pervade our public debates, it is neither an entirely accurate nor a helpful construct for the evaluation of foreign affairs. There have been few, if any, American presidents who considered power to the exclusion of mission or mission to the exclusion of power. Even those who heralded a new age of morality in foreign affairs did so partly because, as in the traditional view, they thought that simply being "America," that beacon of hope, was the best way to increase our influence. Even those who viewed geopolitics as inferior to the American dream used power in pursuit of the dream. Even those who spoke out for a "harder" foreign policy did so as a way of preserving and defending not merely the American nation but also American ideals.

The realist/idealist and mission/power dichotomies are inadequate even as we

seek to understand such presidents as Carter and Reagan. Although the latter was obviously more “realistic” in his (pessimistic) assessment of leftist dictators, neither of these presidents shirked ideals for the sake of power. Reagan appealed to ideals when he urged Gorbachev to “tear down this wall.” The differences between them lay rather in their interpretations of America’s mission and power and in their differing ideas about the best ways to preserve them. Thus, although simplistic dichotomies can be useful in the limited sense I mentioned above, they are often misleading and trivializing as overall assessments of a given president’s foreign policy.

Clearly, the power-politics of Truman distinguished him from Wilson, who spent so much of his time blaming power-politics for the world’s ills. Ignored, however, are the ways in which Truman made his containment policies *an extension* of the Wilsonian internationalist tradition, and in which he described his indebtedness to Wilson. This book examines the complex and intriguing relationship between these two presidents as well as the reverential relationship each had with broader American traditions. It does so by studying each man within the synergistic interplay of ideas and policies. It strives to derive a framework from this study rather than imposing a framework upon it.

For the above reasons, I have been determined to look at these presidents with an open mind. I have tried to listen to what Wilson and Truman had to say. For the above reasons, I have also, however, based this book on the firm conviction that some ideas are better than others. Truman’s brilliantly construed *version* of Wilsonianism holds great promise for us today. Truman’s informed and inspired foreign policy compels us toward a fruitful dialogue with the American past.

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*Part I*

WOODROW WILSON

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## *Chapter 1*

# The Invigoration of Principles and the Assertion of Power: A New President Takes Charge

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Nowhere else in the world have noble men and women exhibited in more striking forms the beauty and the energy of sympathy and helpfulness and counsel in their efforts to rectify wrong, alleviate suffering, and set the weak in the way of strength and hope. We have built up, moreover, a great system of government, which has stood through a long age as in many respects a model for those who seek to set liberty upon foundations that will endure against fortuitous change, against storm and accident. Our life contains every great thing and contains it in great abundance. . . . But the evil has come with the good and much fine gold has been corroded. . . . We see the bad with the good, the debased and decadent with the sound and vital. With this vision we approach new affairs. Our duty is to cleanse, to reconsider, to restore, to correct the evil without impairing the good, to purify and humanize every process of our common life without weakening or sentimentalizing it. (Inaugural Address, March 4, 1913)

Twentieth-century politics acquires part of its meaning and definition from the politics of Woodrow Wilson. With a vengeance, he tackled the vexing problems of his time. With the finesse of a scholar attuned to the world around him, he articulated the yearnings of mankind and created an ideological framework for examining the issues of the day. He came to power at a time when the United States and the world needed new direction and new ideas. His perception of the need for change inspired him to alter the way America's power would be used and to adapt the idea of America's mission to his goals. Although some of the changes he wrought were dramatic and radical, others marked the invigoration and regeneration of traditional American principles.

Wilson's approach to American politics was creative, energetic and resource-



ful, but nevertheless careful and reverent. His study of history prevented him from being blindly appropriated by the presuppositions of the past while at the same time reminding him of that which is noble in it. His religious-philosophical belief in the individual will and in the accountability and responsibility of each individual toward God and mankind inspired him to go beyond history—but only insofar as an untried path seemed to him to contain the distinct possibility of improvement over that already tried and proven. His optimism regarding the future was tempered by his respect for his ideological, theological and political predecessors.

In this sense, Wilson was both “conservative” and “liberal.” As Sydney J. Harris says in *Clearing the Ground*,

Liberal means liberating—it implies more freedom, more openness, more flexibility, more humaneness, more willingness to change when change is called for. Conservative means conserving—it implies preserving what is best and most valuable from the past, a decent respect for tradition, a reluctance to change merely for its own sake.<sup>1</sup>

As Harris argues, “both attributes in a fruitful tension are necessary for the welfare of any social order.” Wilson revealed a deep appreciation of this and attempted, in his own presidency, to combine these attributes. However, as both conservative and liberal, Wilson sometimes exhibited conservative and liberal defects. Harris goes on: “Liberalism alone can degenerate into mere permissiveness and anarchy. Conservatism alone is prone to harden into reaction and repression. As Lord Acton brilliantly put it: Every institution tends to fail by an excess of its own basic principles.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, conservatism becomes (rightly sometimes) associated with hardness and inflexibility. Liberalism becomes (rightly sometimes) associated with softness and impracticality. Wilson suffered from inflexibility in some situations, from impracticality in others. What is most interesting, however, is the way in which Wilson combined an inspired vision of the future with respect for traditional American principles and practices.

On the domestic level, Wilson challenged the excesses of corporations and banks. His “progressive” solutions to problems newly created by the expansion of American industry and finance were marked not only by forward-looking policies such as child-labor and minimum wage laws, but also by policies designed to resurrect traditional standards of conduct. Anti-trust legislation reflected the attempt to preserve and restore respect for individual rights in the face of the *new* phenomenon of special privileges and monopoly power falling into the hands of the “moneyed interests.” Wilson accepted the proliferation and expansion of banks and businesses, but attempted to render their activities compatible with traditional American values. It should be noted that siding with American traditions was not the same as siding with the old against the new, for America had been founded on a “revolutionary” rejection of “old-world” politics. Many of the so-called “new trends” of Wilson’s day could actually be viewed as reversions to a pre-revolutionary state. Lest anyone forget that the

American founders had rejected the old ways of special privileges, elitism and divisions of society based on class, Wilson was there to remind them.

So too in foreign policy, which is the focus of this study, Wilson perceived his task both in terms of moving the country forward to face new challenges, and in terms of restoring and renewing principles and practices in danger of being forgotten. As with the new trends in American domestic life, many of the so-called "new trends" in American foreign policy could actually be viewed as regressions to a pre-revolutionary state. American imperialism in the 1890s, the "gunboat diplomacy" of Roosevelt and the dollar diplomacy of Taft were viewed by Wilson as *departures* from American traditions which seemed precipitously similar to the methods of the "old world."

As with his reaction to new trends in domestic life, Wilson's reaction to these new trends in American foreign policy was ambivalent. He rejected and denounced imperialism as antithetical to traditional American principles, and yet he embraced the call for new solutions to American problems, for new means to American ends and for new interpretations of American principles which had been implicit in the imperialism of the 1890s and its aftermath. In this sense, the developments of the 1890s were both the starting point and the point of departure for Wilson's foreign policy. Because these developments are such an important part of the legacy Wilson inherited, and because their fate holds important insights into just what the American mission means, it is useful to pause to examine them.

The advent of American imperialism is an intriguing phenomenon. Although expansion and the idea of an American mission lay within the American tradition, a mission defined in imperialistic terms and expansion outside the bounds of the western hemisphere were new. Prior to the 1890s, Americans revealed little sympathy for the colonial adventures of Europe. Domination of one people by another was seen to be alien to the spirit of free government. By 1898, the new tendency to connect events in disparate parts of the globe, emotionalism over Spanish atrocities toward Cuban insurgents, outrage over the sinking of the battleship *Maine* in Havana Harbor, the influence of the chauvinistic press and perhaps the need to release domestic frustrations led the American public to advocate an extra-continental war with Spain. Once in the war, the majority in all these groups—business, the Christian religion, the expansionists, the general public and the Republican Party—came to favor a colonial policy which represented a radical departure from the American norm.

This leads to the question: What did all these groups have in common? The answer is that they all came to believe that some *change* in the traditional American way of life was necessary. The church came to see political influence over alien peoples as the best prelude to religious influence. The expansionists and some of the public came to see an aggressive and outward-looking stance as the only way to compete with the "powers" and thereby to preserve American virtue and pride. The business community came to see an aggressive foreign policy as the only means to secure foreign markets. Politicians came to see

expansion as a way of uniting a discontented public and bringing the nation back to political and economic health. Americans groped for new answers to problems created by unemployment, populism, the development of trusts and the closing of the frontier.

Thus, what all these groups had in common was the perception of the need for change and dissatisfaction with America as it was. To the expansionists, American seemed weak, effeminate, vulnerable to socialism and to being pushed out of the world arena by other aggressors. The traditional policy of non-interference outside the western hemisphere appeared insufficient. To the businessman, it seemed that the traditional policy of trade unaided by political connections had proved insufficient for securing economic expansion and health. To the public, intense depressions and social unrest and news of the achievements of the imperialist powers must have made it seem that traditional America was incapable not only of competing with the rest of the world but also of solving internal problems. For religious groups, the fact that missionary work was facilitated by colonialism made it seem that a passive foreign policy was a deterrent to their endeavors. For all these groups, a redefinition of the American mission, which implied a partial rejection of the American tradition, seemed in order.

This redefinition of America's mission came at a time when both the need for change and the *means* for change were apparent. The means was the emergence of America's world-power status. As America's military might grew, its industry and technology began to supersede that of all other countries. The successful outcome of the Venezuelan affair of 1895 seemed to indicate that the United States now had the power and status needed to have its way in the world. Expansionists reiterated that that power was there to be used. The fact that the Union had survived a civil war in 1865 lent credence to the conviction that, more than being a convenient federation of states, the United States was a world power with a will of its own. The simultaneity of America's emergence as a world power and of America's perception of the need to recast its identity is very important for understanding not only its imperialism, but also the advent of Wilsonian internationalism.

This leads to the question of just how far Americans went in recasting their identity. It was the American tradition to depart from many of the conventions of the old world: from militarism, from colonialism and from enforced religion. It was also tradition to concentrate foreign policy in the western hemisphere, leaving the actors in Europe, Asia and Africa to solve military disputes among themselves. In the 1890s, the United States increased its armed and naval forces, involved itself in an extra-continental war between Cuba and Spain, used force to subject the Philippines to colonial rule and used that rule not only to establish American influence in Asia but also to pave the way for Christian evangelists. The United States had violated its democratic ideals of free religion, free government and anti-militarism. It had intervened militarily in a foreign war. For

the time being, it had abandoned its original mission, which was, in contradistinction to the European powers, to set a peaceful example of democracy and justice.

Although colonialism represented a departure from the American tradition in these ways, expansionists drew upon that tradition to justify imperialism. Although America's mission was at first to set a quiet example, the belief in America's superior status contained the seeds of a more aggressive nationalism. The recurring undercurrent of racism lent credence to the notion of a paternal relationship between one race and another. The creeds of "manifest destiny" and "regeneration" which were expounded in the 1890s had been expounded in the 1840s with one important difference: The Mexicans were to be granted statehood and Americans had finally rejected their "obligation" to the Mexicans on racial and moral grounds. In the 1890s, some argued that American greatness had been ensured by expansion and that *continuing* to expand was the only way to prevent stagnation and decline. Once the frontier had closed, America had no choice; it was its destiny to look forward.

It is possible to see in the advent of American imperialism traces of both the Lockean tradition, which emphasizes the competitive nature of society and the importance to the individual of freedom from unnecessary restraints, and the moral-religious tradition as manifest in the Puritan founding, in the nineteenth-century Whig Party and in the evangelical movement of the 1890s. The Lockean unleashing of restraints might theoretically be said to have culminated in the 1890s when "tradition" was doubted, new ideas were formed, and the United States became more aggressive than ever before. The quiet side of Lockeanism, that of peaceful competition, seemed to have failed while economic forcefulness seemed to be required. On the other hand, the moral-religious belief that some people need to be uplifted and enlightened by others received its fruition in the notions of "mission" and "liberty" as they were applied to the Filipinos and the Hawaiians. The subjection of the Filipinos represented at the same time the unleashing of restraints and the desire to put restraints on others. American imperialism was a radical departure from the norm which, nevertheless, found inspiration in the American past.

America's colonial experiment would soon drop out. The realization that the Filipinos did not want to be "uplifted" meant that they had to be subjected, and subjecting them was distasteful to Americans, who valued freedom above all else. It also became burdensome and expensive. It is significant that even before the colonial experiment was abandoned, the United States granted the Philippines a greater measure of freedom than that normally granted to a colony by the European states. American traditions had a mollifying effect on the extent and nature of American aggression. The "anti-imperialists" were there to remind the imperialists that our little experiment in Europeanism was impractical, "un-American" and unjust.

The advent of American imperialism shows that, in spite of those who would view our politics in terms of an all-encompassing consensus, there is room in

our politics for change. The acceptance and the rejection of American imperialism on the grounds of both “principle” and “interest” shows that, in spite of those who would view the United States in terms of an all-encompassing materialism or an all-encompassing idealism, there is room in our politics for both. The fact that both the imperialists and the anti-imperialists argued for their positions simultaneously on the basis of the practical and the moral reveals that the realism–idealism dichotomy is inadequate for explaining American foreign policy.

Even though the United States abandoned its colonialism *per se*, its tendency to interfere in the affairs of foreign nations would recur. From 1898 on, the United States rarely viewed foreign events as unrelated to itself. The gunboat diplomacy of Theodore Roosevelt and the dollar diplomacy of Taft were signs of a more aggressive stance toward the world.

Woodrow Wilson came to power opposing these policies and imperialism itself on the grounds that they violated our traditions, demeaned our moral stature, and, in addition, were impractical in that they alienated native populations, thereby diminishing our influence among them. Wilson shared the pacifistic ideals of the anti-imperialists, their sense that it was America’s mission to present to the world a paragon of democracy and their desire to do good.

However, in certain ways, Wilson accepted the legacy of the imperialists. He too believed that America’s power should be used, albeit for just ends. He too believed that the United States was by its nature essentially right and that it should assume leadership and responsibility in the world. He too believed that we should use our influence to uplift and enlighten others. He too incorporated both the moral-religious tradition and the Lockean tradition into his political philosophy. He too felt that America’s role in the world was destined to be great. Although he realized that the time had come to dismantle imperialism, he recognized that the United States could not simply return to its former state. Old values had to be resurrected but they alone would not solve the problems of the day.

Most people seemed willing to admit that imperialism had been the wrong solution. But solutions were still needed and the problems confronting our nation had not gone away. Wilson’s task was to provide an outlet for American trade, to satisfy the pride and prestige of a newly powerful nation and to prod it toward an expanded vision of its destiny and duty without violating that which was sacred and essential. He had to change the United States without going so far as to ruin it. The difficulties of assuming new responsibilities in the world and satisfying new aspirations toward the world while at the same time maintaining a foreign policy which includes the consideration of what is right and befitting a democracy would prove to be more difficult than Wilson at first imagined.

The problems attending increased duties and ambitions were nowhere more evident than in the Wilson administration’s policies toward Germany and Austria-Hungary. The questions of how the United States came to view these powers as “enemies” and how it treated them once they were, of how the United

States came to view its own involvement in the European war as essential and of how it defined that involvement provide fertile ground for examining the relationship of mission and power. To be an enemy and an ally in a European war, a modern and explosive world war requiring the use of "force without stint or limit," tested our principles and challenged us to refashion our foreign policy as we had never been tested and challenged before. The history of America's struggle to remain neutral, and, finally, to defeat the enemy, provides an excellent medium for examining the tenacity of American ideals. Before delving into this investigation, however, let us briefly examine Wilson's foreign policy in two other areas of special concern to him, the Philippines and Latin America; for it would be a mistake to examine his ideas and tactics toward Europe in a vacuum rather than in the context of what we know about him.

At the outset, Wilson made it clear that the United States would back away from its adventure in imperialism. However, it would not back away from the notion that other peoples had much to gain from contact with us. To Wilson's way of thinking, America's power in relation to certain countries and the benefit to those countries were one and the same, so long as that power was not abused; the United States could give certain countries the liberty and stability which they were incapable of giving themselves. On March 11, 1913, Wilson declared,

We hold, as I am sure all thoughtful leaders of Republican government everywhere hold, that just government rests always upon the consent of the governed, and that there can be no freedom without order based upon law and upon the public conscience and approval. . . . We shall lend our influence of every kind to the realization of these principles in fact and practice knowing that disorder, personal intrigue, and defiance of constitutional right weaken and discredit government and injure none so much as the people who are unfortunate enough to have their common life and their common affairs so tainted and disturbed.<sup>3</sup>

The formula was this: No government was just unless it rested upon the consent of the governed. But popular government did not work unless there were order and respect for the law. The law, in turn, would not be obeyed and respected unless it was just; unless it rested upon the principle of consent. Stability and democracy, Wilson believed, depended upon each other.

The United States, as the successful embodiment of this political creed, had a special duty to help its former colonies and the Latin American states toward which it had assumed special obligations in the Monroe Doctrine to forge orderly constitutional processes and free government. Moreover, Wilson held onto the original rationale for that doctrine: As Tony Smith shows, Wilson feared that instability in the region would invite great-power intervention which, in turn, might jeopardize our security.

Wilson's assumption of the right to interfere in order to bring about "free" governments raises questions about just how free those governments would be. Wilson did not, however, believe that good government could simply be be-

stowed from above. The people themselves had to be desirous of freedom and ready for the responsibilities which freedom entailed. Occupying a country would not make it democratic in the true sense; it might only cause the people to resent and despise us. Gradually instilling in the people the belief in democracy and teaching them the ways of democracy might. "Gradualism" was an underlying tenet of Wilson's political philosophy.

Wilson's approach toward the Philippines revealed just such a combination of energy and restraint. In an address to Congress on December 2, 1913, Wilson said of the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Hawaii:

Such territories, once regarded as mere possessions, are no longer to be selfishly exploited; they are part of the domain of public conscience and serviceable and enlightened statesmanship. We must administer them for the people who live in them with the same sense of responsibility to them as toward our own people in domestic affairs.<sup>4</sup>

Believing that the Filipinos needed our faith in democratic institutions before they could be granted our freedoms, Wilson took steps to prepare the Philippines for independence. He gave native citizens a majority in the appointive commission and thus secured them majority representation in the Upper and Lower Houses of the Legislature. Once they had demonstrated their capacity for self-government, they were to be granted independence. On December 7, 1920, Wilson would announce that that capacity had been demonstrated, and would ask Congress to fulfill its promise by granting the Philippines independence.

Similarly, at the outset, the new president criticized dollar diplomacy with money as an end in itself and gunboat diplomacy for the sake of territorial aggrandizement or imperialistic conquests in Latin America. Wilson assured those concerned with material gain that, in the long run, the friendship and trust of the Latin American people and the formation of vital democracies would be more conducive to the proliferation of trade between our countries than the military bolstering of pro-American dictators or the imposition of unfair economic terms. In the long run, our "influence" rested upon our prestige. As would Truman, Wilson undercut the dichotomy between the "ideal" and the "necessary" by suggesting that exemplary behavior is precisely that which leads to power and influence. If, he argued, the United States had the backing of the will of the people, weapons and unfair trade practices were unnecessary. If it did not, weapons and illicit acts were only temporary expedients destined to encounter resistance. He declared:

Other nations have been strong, other nations have piled wealth as high as the sky, but they have come into disgrace because they used their force and their wealth for the oppression of mankind and their own aggrandizement; and America will not bring glory to herself; but disgrace by following the beaten paths of history.<sup>5</sup>

It should be noted, however, that Wilson's juxtaposition of his own policies with those of Roosevelt and Taft was based, in part, on exaggerating their mis-

deeds while downplaying the extent to which both men pursued diplomacy through international cooperation. As Frank Ninkovich observes, "for both presidents, America's future as a world power lay in cooperation with other powers who behaved in a 'civilized' manner."<sup>6</sup> Taft's "Open Door Policy" was a manifestation of this view. Observes Ninkovich,

Unfortunately for his historical reputation, Taft's outlook was enshrined in the phrase "Dollar Diplomacy," a phrase that Democrats used for decades as a stick with which to beat the Republicans at election time. But when Taft stated in his message to Congress that "modern diplomacy is commercial," he did not mean to suggest that Dollar Diplomacy was devoted merely to the service of commercial interests. The underlying assumption was that warlike methods—*Roosevelt* methods—were outdated and that peaceful cooperation and commercial expansion were now the order of the day.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, Wilson's own stance toward Roosevelt's methods was ambivalent. In regard to countries which had stable and free governments, Wilson did indeed reflect the anti-imperialist interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, following his own counsel for restraint. However, in regard to countries which had turbulent or despotic governments, Wilson's sense of mission, combined with his belief in the importance of a unified and stable western hemisphere, compelled him to qualify the anti-imperialist interpretation and to come close to adopting that of Roosevelt. In pursuit of ends he considered essential and just, the spread of democracy and order throughout the western hemisphere, Wilson displayed that vigor and energy which Roosevelt so admired.

This ambiguous stance toward the legacy of his predecessors was evident in Wilson's approach toward Mexico. There, he did not find it as easy as he had in the Philippines to combine energy with restraint. Wilson violated the tradition of recognizing a government on the basis of its *de facto* existence and applied his own standards instead. He refused to recognize the dictator Huerta, whose troops had deposed and murdered the reformist Madero two weeks prior to Wilson's inauguration; Wilson pressured Europe to do the same. He ignored the pleas of the "moneyed interests" for recognition so that they could proceed with "business as usual." Instead, he demanded that Huerta permit free and fair elections immediately and remove himself from candidacy. As Ray Stannard Baker explains,

To recognize Huerta was to give moral support to despotism and to put a premium on revolutions. To fall in with the purposes of the dollar diplomatists, to accept the doctrine of order by force, after proclaiming the new day and the new freedom in the United States would make him a living illustration of a horrible iniquity.<sup>8</sup>

In late November of 1913, Wilson sent a statement entitled "Our Purposes in Mexico" to various legations and embassies and to Huerta himself in which he said:



Usurpations like that of General Huerta menace the peace and development of America as nothing else could. . . . It is the purpose of the United States to discredit and defeat such usurpations wherever they occur. The present policy of the government of the United States is to isolate General Huerta entirely; to cut him off from foreign sympathy and aid and from domestic credit, whether moral or material, and force him out. . . . If General Huerta does not retire by force of circumstances it will become the duty of the United States to use less peaceful means to put him out. . . . Beyond this fixed purpose the government of the United States will not go. It will not permit itself to seek any special advantages in Mexico or elsewhere for its own citizens but will seek, here as elsewhere, to show itself the consistent champion of the open door.<sup>9</sup>

Adhering to the principles outlined in this statement, Wilson announced at Mobile that he would avoid intervention that included the acquisition of territory and would seek only to make possible the development of constitutional government in Mexico.

However, Wilson's methods for doing just that became increasingly aggressive, and the foreign policy of the United States increasingly expansive. Wilson soon exceeded what the anti-imperialists and others considered to be the proper bounds of the American tradition and of the Monroe Doctrine. The Tampico Affair, in which the "honor" of U.S. officers had been offended when they were detained and questioned by Mexico authorities, led to a display of American military might in Tampico Bay. (It should be noted, however, that Wilson ignored those who saw this and other "insults" as reasons for war.) Once the "constitutionalists" finally assumed control, Wilson sided with a rival revolutionary faction which split off from the constitutionalists. Even though Villa, the leader of that faction, appeared to be less moderate than the constitutionalist leader Carranza, and even though the ascension of Carranza gave Mexico the hope of democratic government, the deposing of Carranza and the enthroning of Villa became Wilson's chief objective! This was largely because Villa had manifested a willingness to follow Wilson's advice and to establish a government which Wilson could influence and control.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, Wilson's desire to control the situation created an inconsistency between his means and his ends. Although he professed the desire to bring the Mexicans peace, the decision to support Villa could only exacerbate civil war. By the time Wilson threw his support behind Carranza, he had lessened the possibilities for that friendship and trust which he himself had said was the only true and lasting basis for "influence." For, from the beginning, his interference was something which neither the "Huertistas" nor the "constitutionalists" wanted.

The difficulty of combining an energetic foreign policy toward Latin America with fairness and restraint was even more apparent in Wilson's relations with Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic and Haiti. In Nicaragua, Secretary of State Bryan approved a treaty which made it a U.S. protectorate and which was conceived by American bankers and the Diaz regime as the means to keep an

unpopular government in power. The treaty seemed to the administration the only way to preserve American influence and prevent civil war. With Wilson's approval, the U.S. Army occupied the Dominican Republic in order to end the civil war. A temporary military government was set up, albeit with the hope that, with U.S. assistance, that country could achieve the stability and the democratic disposition which would make intervention unnecessary. In Haiti, the administration clearly went further than Wilson's own stated principles would allow. The State Department took the Haitian Revolution as the occasion to seize control of Haitian customs houses, to press for a naval base, and, in general, to bring Haiti under American control.

On the other hand, Wilson did take the lead in a movement to unite the American republics in a Pan-American Alliance which would "bind them to mutual guarantee of territorial integrity and of political independence under republican forms of government, to settle all disputes by peaceful means, and mutually to refrain from aiding the enemies of any signatory government."<sup>11</sup> Arthur S. Link exaggerated slightly when he said that Wilson paid only "lip service to it."<sup>12</sup> In Mexico, Wilson refused to support a dictator for the sake of "economic interests" and, arguing on behalf of Mexico's territorial integrity, refused to go to war, even after Villa's "bandits" raided Texas territory and committed murder on American soil. At other times and in other places, Wilson denounced and refused to support exploitative practices and deals between American industry and finance and foreign peoples.<sup>13</sup>

Wilson was against the exemption of American ships from paying tolls in the Panama Canal Zone not only because it was unjust in that it violated the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty with England, and unfair in that it gave us material advantage on the basis of physical might, but also because it would diminish our standing in the world, lessen the desire of others to do business and make treaties with us and undermine our ability to demand that others fulfill their pledges to us. In a speech at Independence Hall on July 4, 1914, Wilson's belief in the inseparability of fair play and the ability to maintain influence was explicit:

A patriotic American . . . is never so proud of the great flag under which he lives as when it comes to mean to other people as well as to himself a symbol of hope and liberty. . . . And so I say that it is patriotic sometimes to prefer the honor of the country to its material interest. Would you rather be deemed by all the nations of the world incapable of keeping your treaty obligations in order that you might have free tolls for American ships?<sup>14</sup>

In an address to Congress on March 5, 1914, Wilson added, "We consented to the treaty; its language we accepted, if we did not originate it; and we are too big, too powerful, too self-respecting a nation to interpret with a too strained or refined reading the words of our own promises just because we have power enough to give us leave to read them as we please."<sup>15</sup>

What *can* be said is that it was increasingly difficult to assume new "respon-

sibilities" in the world while at the same time remaining "responsible" to the principles of democratic government. This was especially so given that Wilson defined those responsibilities in terms of the internal politics of other nations and given that, in those areas where gunboat and dollar diplomacy had already been practiced, and hence where the people had perhaps already been antagonized, Wilson's choice often seemed to be that between continuing those practices and relinquishing American influence, and hence American "responsibilities," altogether.

This brief examination of Wilson's policies toward the Philippines and Latin America is meant to help us to study his policies toward Europe with an open mind, to free us from delimiting labels and categories and to create a distance between us and those who diminish and trivialize American foreign policy. The idealist/realist and conservative/liberal dichotomies are useful for understanding Wilson only up to a point. So too, the view of American politics which disregards these dichotomies and imposes on the entire history of American politics a single theme or idea is useful only up to a point. In analyzing American politics, we should seek a middle ground. We must recognize consistencies where they do exist, inconsistencies where they exist. We need to admit the possibility of change and evolution while at the same time realizing the tenacity of certain American ideals and practices, even though they have evolved as they have endured.

For those who view American politics in terms of the monolithic power of the idea of freedom to pursue (selfish) interests, we must ask if Wilson is a mere aberration, as George Will considers Lincoln an aberration.<sup>16</sup> But how can it be that these two aberrations from the American way of life drew so much of their inspiration from it? Everything Wilson said and did he said and did in the name of American principles. Whether he intended to modify and modernize them, resurrect or reassert them, his ideals and tactics were always grounded in his understanding of the American past. And his understanding led him to assert that the United States, more than any other nation, stood for *more than* the pursuit of interests. It stood for the potential in all of mankind for government based on liberty and justice, for "fair play" in its treatment of other nations and for the consideration of "right" in our foreign policy. Was Wilson, then, an idealist who opposed hard-nosed realists such as Lodge, Mahan and Roosevelt? But in what sense was a man like Roosevelt a realist? True, he advocated a "hard" foreign policy but he did so not primarily out of a calculation of our interests, but out of ideals regarding the importance of an expansive foreign policy to American prestige, spirit and pride, and out of ideals regarding our obligation to "uplift" backward peoples. In fact, Roosevelt, like Wilson, admonished against making our interests our dominant concern.

Is that, then, the key to Americanism? Are we all appropriated by an impractical idealism? Is a hopelessly romantic view of democracy and its virtues that which unites us? Did opposition to dollar diplomacy imply a disregard for our interests? Quite the contrary, Wilson believed that applying the principles

of fair play and reciprocity was the best way to win friends and influence. Trade would not flourish where there was hatred and distrust. On the other hand, Wilson did not live up to his ideals. Was he, then, simply another American pragmatist willing to subordinate considerations of right to considerations of power? No, for we must see that his desire for power was intricately connected to his desire to spread the American dream. And nothing, to Wilson, could have been more right than this.

Wilson *changed* the United States' relations with Latin America and *expanded* its vision of the Monroe Doctrine, and yet, in certain senses, he shared the ideals and the tactics of both the expansionists and the "anti-imperialists." Our understanding of Wilson is only partial and superficial if we neglect either the similarities or the differences between him and his predecessors, if we ignore either the continuity or the divergence in his relationship with American traditions. With reverence, but with energy and enthusiasm, he took the American mission and American power and used them as tools to forge the United States ahead into the twentieth century.

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## *Chapter 2*

# Passive in Arms but Active in Words: The American Neutral as Teacher and Redeemer

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Here in America we have tried to set the example of bringing all the world together upon the terms of liberty, and co-operation, and peace, and in that great experience that we have been going through America has been a sort of prophetic sample of mankind. Now the world outside of America has felt the forces of America; felt the forces of freedom, the forces of common aspiration, the forces that bring every man and every nation face to face with this question, "What are you going to do with your power? Are you going to translate it into force, or are you going to translate it into peace and the salvation of society?" (Address to Congress, April 19, 1916)

Wilson's creative and ambiguous stance toward the legacy of his predecessors is evident in his behavior during the Neutrality Period. Although this period has been described in terms of traditional American isolation or aloofness from European politics; in terms of typical American selfishness and unwillingness to engage in other peoples' struggles; in terms of a recurring idealism which allows us to ignore the stakes for our security in the outcome of foreign wars; and in terms of a pervasive materialism which caused our "bias" in favor of the Allies whose purchases were fueling our economy, none of these descriptions is adequate.

If we must have a framework, it should be that of the dynamic relationship which Wilson had with traditions and practices in the United States and Europe. During this period, Wilson sought to educate and enlighten both foreign and American opinion. He fought the old with the new, the new with the old, the new with the new, and the old with the old. He fought the new with the old insofar as he used traditional American respect for order and peace to resist the new technology of mass destruction. He fought the old with the new insofar as

he prodded hesitant Americans toward a more energetic and constructive relationship with the world. He fought the old with the old insofar as he opposed the European tradition of geopolitics with the traditional American aversion to those methods. And he fought the new with the new insofar as he responded to a new and pernicious kind of war with original ideas of his own.

The reasons for American neutrality were both "principled" and "practical." Wilson believed it to be *safe* to stay out of the war so long as German victory was not certain, and *just* in that neutrality demonstrated our peaceability while allowing us to play the role of arbiter. Wilson's response to the war was no mere response of an idealist to European realists. Wilson believed that the *Europeans* were naive for clinging to what he believed to be worn-out and failed tactics and beliefs. He believed they were foolish for believing, before the war, that the balance of power could assure peace and, after the war had erupted, for believing that their future peace might be assured if only they could shift the "balance" in their favor. This awful war, he believed, was testimony to the need for new ideas and a more energetic, influential and responsible American foreign policy.

In order to be influential and responsible, Wilson believed, Americans had to be forthcoming and generous. Throughout not only the Neutrality Period but throughout his entire presidency, Wilson spoke out against selfishness. Whether for the policies of a nation or for the activities of an individual or a group, Wilson argued that "self-interest" was an insufficient and morally bereft guide. In his mind, however, a lack of morals was not the same as a lack of ideals. If an imperialist country, a greedy person or a monopolistic company thought only of its self-interest, that did not mean that it lacked an ideology or philosophy of life; it simply meant that its ideology was immoral. In a speech before the Federal Council of Churches, Wilson undercut the dichotomy between "life and doctrine":

There is an old antithesis upon which I do not care to dwell, because there is not a great deal to be got from dwelling on it, between life and doctrine. Here is no real antithesis. A man lives as he believes he ought to live or as he believes it is to his advantage to live. He lives upon a doctrine, upon a principle, upon an idea—sometimes a very low principle, sometimes a very exalted principle.<sup>1</sup>

Self-interest, Wilson believed, was the *wrong* principle upon which to live.

Unlike many conservatives and liberals of today who define their policies in terms of their effect upon our standard of living, which has come to mean our material comfort, Wilson constantly told Americans that there were higher things to consider. In that same speech, he declared:

The world has advanced, advanced in what we regard as real civilization, not by material but by spiritual means, and one nation is distinguished from another nation by its ideals,

not by its possessions, by what it lives by, by what it intends, by the visions which its young men dream and the achievements which its mature men attempt.<sup>2</sup>

To that viewpoint which held that democracy's role was merely to allow each person to pursue his or her "interests," Wilson responded with a harsh rebuff. He insisted that there were more important sides both to our tradition as Americans and to our dignity as human beings:

All the transforming influences in the world are unselfish. . . . The reason that I am proud to be an American is because America was given birth to by conceptions such as these; that its object in the world, its only reason for existence as a Government, was to show men the path of liberty and of mutual serviceability, to lift the common man out of the sloughs of discouragement and even despair; set his feet upon firm ground; tell him, "Here is the high road upon which you are as much entitled to walk as we are, and we will see that there is a free field and no favor, and that as your moral qualities are and your physical powers, so will your success be. We will not let any man make you afraid, and we will not let any man do you an injustice."<sup>3</sup>

Wilson recognized that there was a selfish tendency in individualistic Americans, but he saw another tendency more powerful and compelling. Unlike so many politicians of today, Wilson did not ingratiate and congratulate the public for what they were but rather urged them on to something better. He incessantly reminded Americans that an essential part of America's meaning was its demonstration of the principles of freedom, democracy and justice for the benefit of all mankind. At Indianapolis, on January 8, 1915, Wilson intoned, "The United States had almost forgotten that it must keep its fighting ardor in behalf of mankind when Andrew Jackson became President and you will notice that whenever the United States forgets its ardor for mankind it is necessary that a Democrat would be elected President."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Wilson continually reminded Americans of their ardor for mankind.

This insistence upon unselfishness would have an effect on the *nature* of American neutrality, for it included the notion that we had to consider the problems of others as our own. At Swarthmore College, on October 25, 1913, Wilson asked,

Do you covet honor? You will never get it by serving yourself. Do you covet distinction? You will get it only as the servant of mankind. Do not forget, then, as you walk these classic places, why you are here. You are not here merely to prepare to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand.<sup>5</sup>

Ours was to be a neutrality of superiority to the power-politics of Europe, but not of selfishness or indifference. On April 20, 1915, Wilson admonished: "The basis of neutrality, gentlemen, is not indifference, it is not self-interest. The basis



of neutrality is a sympathy for mankind. It is fairness, it is good will at bottom. It is impartiality of spirit and of judgment."<sup>6</sup>

American policy toward Europe had, in Wilson's view, to include not only the mission of spreading our democratic ideas and institutions but also the more general consideration of "right." Fair play was essential. But being fair to others satisfied more than our consciences. It was essential to our power, viewed as prestige and influence. Being a powerful nation meant increased responsibilities, but it did not mean pursuing selfish ends through force.

The old idea of the fulfillment of a democratic mission through the setting of a democratic example was still articulated by Wilson before and during the Neutrality Period. On October 25, 1913, he had asked Philadelphians, "How are you going to assist in some small part to give the American people, and, *by example*, the peoples of the world more liberty, more happiness, more substantial prosperity, and how are you going to make that prosperity a common heritage instead of a selfish possession?"<sup>7</sup> But Wilson continued that process which began even before the imperialism of the 1890s of taking a passive mission and making it active.

Just as the original ideal continued to exist alongside of new, more energetic interpretations of our mission, so, too, the original idea of potential harm to our interests and ideals through involvement in the power struggles of Europe continued to exist alongside of the new notion that we had to get involved. In Wilson's early speeches we see two ideas competing with each other. One is that we must avoid corrupting ourselves and our institutions through association with those less virtuous and enlightened than ourselves. The other is that of the meliorative effect which contact with us has on the ideas and institutions of others. Reflecting the former viewpoint on May 16, 1914, Wilson explained:

It was not merely because of passing and transient circumstances that Washington said that we must keep free from entangling alliances. It was because he saw that no country had yet set its face in the direction in which America had set her face. We cannot form alliances with those who are not going our way; and in our might and majesty and in the confidence and definition of our own purpose we need not and we should not form alliances with any nation in the world.<sup>8</sup>

The period of neutrality can be seen as a period in which this idea of potential harm to us from contact with Europe competes with and is finally outweighed by the idea of the potentially good effect on Europe of contact with us. The idea that alliances would corrupt us would give way to the idea that joining the Alliance powers would serve and protect our high purposes. Wilson would eventually take the position that we must sacrifice some of the purity which comes from aloofness from foreign struggles and wars in order to influence and help others.

The original idea of America's superior status contained within it the seeds of a more aggressive nationalism. In Wilson's presidency, that nationalism be-

came “internationalism”: Our virtue did not allow us to exploit others; if it did, the effect would negate the cause. Our virtue did, however, permit us to assist others and to lead them. In Wilson’s mind, our superior status not only allowed us to help others; it required it. For just as our virtue would be negated if used to justify unvirtuous behavior, so too that virtue would be negated if it were not used at all. In Wilson’s mind, a virtue kept to oneself was a form of selfishness. It was not enough to be virtuous; we had to teach our virtues and to share them. On October 24, 1914, Wilson admonished against “cloistered” virtues:

There is a fine passage in Milton’s prose writings which I am sorry to say I cannot quote, but the meaning of which I can give you, and it is worth hearing. He says that he has no patience with a cloistered virtue that does not go out and seek its adversary. Ah, how tired I am of the men who are merely on the defensive, who hedge themselves in, who perhaps enlarge the hedge enough to include their little family circle and ward off all the evil influences of the world from that loved and hallowed group. How tired I am of the men whose virtue is selfish because it is merely self-protective. . . . I have had the fortune to take part in affairs of a considerable variety of sorts, and I have tried to hate as few persons as possible, but there is an exquisite combination of contempt and hate that I have for a particular kind of person, and that is the moral coward.<sup>9</sup>

Just as, in Wilson’s mind, our power was there to be used, albeit for just ends, so, too, our virtue was to be valued not only for its merit, but also for its usefulness. On the level of foreign policy, this meant that it was not enough for the United States to set a peaceful example; it also had to do positive good. World War I created both the necessity and the opportunity of “interfering” in the world in order to make it better.

Interestingly, it was our reputation for *lack* of interference in the affairs of others for *selfish* ends which, Wilson hoped, would allow us the opportunity to interfere for *just* ends. The fact that we traditionally respected the territorial integrity of other nations and eschewed imperialistic conquest might be just that which would cause both sides to accept our mediation and to consider our ideas regarding the peace.

In his second inaugural address to Congress, on December 8, 1914, Wilson defended the country’s lack of “preparedness” measures on the grounds that our lack of bellicosity lessened the chances that others would aggress against us and increased the chances that they would accept our help:

We are indeed a true friend to all the nations of the world, because we threaten none, covet the possessions of none, desire the overthrow of none. . . . Our friendship can be accepted and is accepted without reservation, because it is offered in a spirit and for a purpose which no one need ever question or suspect. Therein lies our greatness. We are the champions of peace and of concord. And we should be very jealous of this distinction which we have sought to earn. Just now we should be particularly jealous of it, because it is our dearest present hope that this character and reputation may presently, in God’s providence, bring us an opportunity such as has seldom been vouchsafed any nation. The opportunity to counsel and obtain peace in the world and reconsideration and a healing

settlement of many a matter that has cooled and interrupted the friendship of nations. This is the time above all others when we should wish and resolve to keep our strength by self-possession, our influence by preserving our ancient principles of action.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, neutrality befitted our tradition of restraint from militaristic and imperialistic aggression. Now, however, restraint was to be rendered compatible with a certain *kind* of aggressiveness; ours was to be an *involved*-neutrality. We would *use* our moral standing in the world and use our prestige and influence as a burgeoning world power to bring about peace.

The condition of the modern world required that we either act or be acted upon. New methods of quick communication meant that ideas contrary to our own would be widely heard. In an address at Charlotte, North Carolina, on May 20, 1916, Wilson expounded: "And, as these processes of intercommunication have been developed and quickened, men of the same nation not only have grown close neighbors with each other, but men of different nations have grown close neighbors with each other; and now that we have these invisible tongues that speak by the wireless through the trackless air to the ends of the world, every man can make every other man in the world and his neighbor speak to him upon the moment."<sup>11</sup> A newly mobilized and informed world "public" meant that if we did not influence minds, someone else would. In an address to the American Bar Association on October 20, 1914, Wilson declared, "The opinion of the world is the mistress of the world; and the processes of international law are the slow processes by which opinion works its will."<sup>12</sup>

Mission and power, ideals and interest were inseparable in a world in which opinion was mobilized and alert. One had to win the hearts and minds of mankind in order to have influence and power. If Wilson did not speak to the needs and longings of "the people," someone else would. It seemed that whether we liked it or not, we were no longer immune to the goings-on in Europe. Either influence or be influenced, listen to or be heard. Wilson constantly implored the American public not to be influenced or prejudiced by the divisions and quarrels in Europe. In asking them to remain neutral in thought and deed, he asked them not to *listen* to the screeching voices emanating from the other side of the ocean.

In asking the American people to favor neither the Entente nor the Central Powers, Wilson was, in addition, asking them to be united. Frequently depicting the American nation as a melting pot, he implied that, in order to be a nation, it had to be a place where individuals willingly subordinated their selfish interests to the interests of the whole, and where ethnic groups (for example, German Americans) subordinated their allegiance to that group to their allegiance to the national government. In an April 1915 address to the Associated Press, he declared:

We are compounded of the nations of the world; we mediate their blood, we mediate their traditions, we mediate their sentiments, their tastes, their passions; we are ourselves compounded of those things. We are, therefore, able to understand them in the compound,

not separately as partisans, but united as knowing and comprehending and embodying them all.<sup>13</sup>

On May 10, he added, in an address to naturalized foreign-born citizens:

You cannot dedicate yourself to America unless you become in every respect and with every purpose of your will thorough Americans. You cannot become thorough Americans if you think of yourselves in groups. . . . A man who thinks of himself as belonging to a particular national group in America has not yet become an American, and the man that goes among you to trade upon your nationality is no worthy son to live under the Stars and Stripes.<sup>14</sup>

In another speech, Wilson used the dual notions of the American melting pot and the newly interconnected world to suggest that "now the melting pot is bigger than America. It is as big as the world." Such a world was ripe for the infusion and diffusion of American democratic ideas. Such a situation should "quicken the imagination of every man, and quicken the patriotism of every man who cared for America." The United States was that nation which "tried to set the example of bringing all the world together upon the terms of liberty, and cooperation, and peace." America was "a sort of prophetic sample of mankind."<sup>15</sup>

It is therefore to be noted that Wilson's attempt to mediate, to appeal for peace to the peoples in Europe over the heads of their rulers, and to get the American people to accept the notion of "service" in the world was not simply altruism. In Wilson's view, and in the view of most Americans, others stood to gain more from contact with us than we stood to gain from contact with them. However, we also stood to gain. A more active involvement in Europe put us on the offensive rather than the defensive by preventing us from being unknowingly corrupted by their ideas and allowing us to spread our own.

We were to take the lead in helping European powers in part so that they would not take the lead in harming us. We were to become entangled in the problems of Europeans in part so that they would not succeed in entangling us in their schemes and goals. Wilson at first envisioned the United States' new entanglement in Europe only in terms of the extension of moral and political persuasion, and of economic interaction. Only later did he come to believe that we would have to reject Washington's prohibition against alliances with the Europeans in order to maximize our influence upon the Europeans and to minimize their influence upon us. Even then, he would seek to uphold our distinction from the Europeans by refusing to call the United States an ally, preferring instead the term "associate."

Reflecting his initial opinion that an involved-neutrality was the best means to influence, Wilson asked:

Do you not think it likely that the world will sometime turn to America and say, "You were right and we were wrong. You kept your head when we lost ours. You tried to

keep the scale from tipping, and we threw the whole weight of arms on one side of the scale. Now, in your self-possession, in your coolness, in your strength, may we not turn to you for counsel and assistance?" Think of the deep-wrought destruction of economic resources, of life, and of hope that is taking place in some part of the world, and think of the reservoir of sustenance that there is in this great land of plenty! May we not look forward to the time when we shall be called blessed among the nations because we succored the nations of the world in their time of distress and of dismay?<sup>16</sup>

And, again, at New York on April 20, 1915, Wilson expostulated:

Our atmosphere is not yet charged with the disturbing elements which must permeate every nation of Europe. Therefore, is it not likely that the nations of the world will someday turn to us for a cooler assessment of the elements engaged? I am not now thinking so preposterous a thought as that we should sit in judgment upon them—no nation is fit to sit in judgment upon any other nation—but that we shall someday have to assist in reconstructing the processes of peace. Our services are untouched; we are more and more becoming by force of circumstances the mediating Nation of the world in respect to its finance. We must make up our own minds what are the best things to do and what are the best ways to do them. We must put our money, our energy, our enthusiasm, our sympathy into these things and we must have our judgments prepared and our spirits chastened against the coming of that day.<sup>17</sup>

It is significant that when the United States finally abandoned neutrality and declared war on Germany, Wilson had abandoned hope of *influencing* Europe through peaceable methods. Leaders on both sides of the conflict had rejected his attempts to forge a compromise peace and revealed their indifference to moral persuasion. It is also significant that the war was waged not merely to defeat the enemy but also to *reform* enemy and ally alike. To understand the process by which the United States became a belligerent, we need first to examine the specific aspects of its endeavor to remain the involved-neutral.

In spite of his admonitions for a neutral demeanor and outlook, evidence suggests that Wilson himself found it difficult to remain neutral "in spirit." The picture one gets from an examination of Wilson's letters and papers and from the accounts of his contemporaries is as follows.

On balance, if he *had* to choose, Wilson favored victory for the Allies. He knew that the security of the United States had hitherto rested partially upon the protective shield of English power, and felt that a German victory would threaten *all* democracies, requiring the United States to "arm itself to the teeth." Wilson was deeply offended by the German occupation of Belgium and the cruel methods Germany used to subdue that innocent country. Having made the conscious decision to terrorize Belgium into submission, Germany's methods included the ravaging of towns and countryside, the unwarranted destruction of the historic city of Louvaine, the murdering of innocent civilians and the deportation of Belgian men to labor camps. Wilson was to be shocked by Germany's refusal to pressure its Turkish ally to stop its atrocities toward the

Armenians; by the divulging of Germany's Mittel-Europa scheme to dominate all of Central Europe; by the Zimmerman Telegram, which revealed a German plan to get Mexico into the war by promising it U.S. territory; and, of course, by German submarine warfare, which was worse than Allied interference with shipping and trade because it involved the loss not just of neutral property, but of innocent civilian life.

Unlike the English, French, Italian and Belgian systems of government, Wilson felt the German system to be entirely alien. With its autocracy and its militarism, with the hold the military had on the civilian class and on all the procedures of government, the German way of life seemed the antithesis of our own. On August 30, 1914, Wilson's personal adviser and close friend, Colonel Edward M. House, recorded in his diary:

I was interested to hear him express as his opinion what I had written him some time ago in one of my letters, to the effect that if Germany won it would change the course of our civilization and make the United States a military nation. He also spoke of his deep regret, as indeed I did to him, that it would check his policy for a better international ethical code. . . . He felt deeply the destruction of Louvain, and I found him as unsympathetic with the German attitude as is the balance of America. He goes even further than I in his condemnation of Germany's part in this war, and almost allows his feeling to include the German people as a whole rather than the leaders alone. He said German philosophy was essentially selfish and lacking in spirituality.<sup>18</sup>

In May of 1915, Wilson's personal secretary, Joseph Tumulty, broached the subject of the British blockade and "laid before the President the use our enemies were making of his patient attitude toward England."<sup>19</sup> According to Tumulty, Wilson responded by saying, "I have gone to the very limit impressing our claims upon England and urging the British Foreign Office to modify the blockade." He then referred to a letter from the Ambassador to England, Walter Hines Page, citing Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey's remark that "America must remember that we are fighting her fight as well as our own, to save the civilization of the world." Wilson said, "He was right. England is fighting our fight and you may well understand that I shall not, in the present state of the world's affairs, place obstacles in her way."<sup>20</sup>

Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan would resign because of Wilson's unwillingness to back up his demand for "freedom of the seas" in the same way toward England as toward Germany. On May 7, 1915, the Germans, having declared a war zone around the British Isles, sunk the *Lusitania* without warning. American lives were lost. Bryan asked Robert Lansing to investigate and found that practically the entire cargo consisted of military supplies, although the only ammunition was 4,200 cases of cartridges.<sup>21</sup> He wrote a note to Wilson maintaining that, as a belligerent, Germany had a right to prevent contraband from going through. Nevertheless, Wilson prepared a note placing "strict accountability" on the German government for their actions. Bryan thought the note too

sharp, given the softness of our complaints to England regarding the illegal blockade of Germany, the detention of our ships and the searching of our mails. He pointed out that the illegal actions for which we were condemning Germany were taken in retaliation for illegal British actions which we tolerated.

He believed that the only way to prevent irreparable damage to our neutrality was simultaneously to send a note of protest to the Allies. He also wanted Wilson to write a postscript to the note to the Germans saying that strict accountability need not mean immediate accountability and that a settlement might be delayed until the peace.<sup>22</sup> After consideration, Wilson refused to do either of these things, and Bryan resigned.

While Bryan was convinced that Wilson did not go far enough in protesting the illegal British interference with our trade, Robert Lansing, who succeeded him, believed that Wilson went too far. In his *War Memoirs*, he expressed the belief that Wilson made a grave mistake in making "freedom of the seas" a primary principle in our dealings with the Germans and the British. If Germany had complied with our demands and stopped its submarine warfare, he argued, we would have had no choice but to focus our grievances on the unlawful practices of the British. The use of this phrase not only encouraged the Germans to hope that we would go to the limit in protests to the British; it backed us into a corner so that we might have had to focus our grievance on precisely that side which we did not want to see defeated. Lansing recorded:

I have sometimes wondered what would have been the result if Count Bernstorff's advice had prevailed with his government and if submarine warfare had been abandoned. Would not the United States have been forced to continue her unheeded protests to Great Britain for the many frequent violations of international law by the British navy? Would not the American people have become more and more irritated at the British disregard of their rights and demanded naval convoys or armaments for American ships engaged in legitimate trade with neutral countries bordering on the North Sea? Could a clash with the British Navy have been avoided? And would a clash have resulted in war?<sup>23</sup>

From Lansing, as well as from House and Page, Wilson was constantly hearing the opinion that the proper principle to emphasize in our relations with the Germans and the English was that of democracy's opposition to autocracy, not "freedom of the seas." Although Wilson was clearly an advocate and spokesman for democracy, they wanted him to apply that predilection more specifically to the problems of the war. They insisted that the United States could not afford a victory for autocracy, and that its bias in favor of the Allies should be more predominant and explicit.

Although it is true that Wilson frequently enunciated the "freedom of the seas" as a principle of American foreign policy, he abated the possibility of being forced into war with England over that principle. He did that by making distinctions between *kinds* of violations of that principle, between violations which involved the loss of property and violations which involved the loss of life:

Property rights can be vindicated by claims for damages when the war is over, and no modern nation can decline to arbitrate such claims; but the fundamental rights of humanity cannot be. The loss of life is irreparable. Neither can direct violations of a nation's sovereignty await vindication or suits for damages.<sup>24</sup>

Wilson further lessened the possibility of war with England by making it clear that the United States would not go to war for the sake of "its interests alone." On February 26, 1916, at Washington, Wilson declared that America ought to keep out of this war "at the sacrifice of everything except the single thing upon which her character and history has been founded, her sense of humanity and justice." It should not seek "safety at the expense of humanity."<sup>25</sup> Making the distinction between our interests and the "rights of mankind" explicit, Wilson asserted in a February 1916 address at Topeka:

We are more indispensable now to the nations at war by the maintenance of our peace than we could possibly be to either side if we are engaged in the war, and therefore there is a moral obligation laid upon us to keep free the courses of our commerce and of our finance, and I believe that America stands ready to vindicate these rights. . . . But there are rights higher than either of those, higher than the rights of individual Americans outside of America, higher and greater than the rights of trade and of commerce. I mean the rights of mankind.<sup>26</sup>

Given that English violations of our "freedom of the seas" injured our property, while German submarine warfare involved the loss of life, by these distinctions Wilson freed himself from the moral and political necessity of declaring war on England should the Germans cease their submarine warfare, while English transgressions on our commerce grew worse. It is true, however, that had this occurred, Wilson would have found it awkward, if not politically impossible, to declare war on Germany. For putting himself in this position, Wilson can rightly be criticized.

If Wilson was, then, concerned with the effect a German victory would have on our democracy and our security, why did he make "freedom of the seas" the explicit issue during the Neutrality Period rather than autocracy versus democracy, as Lansing would have liked; or Germany's threat to the geopolitical configuration of the world, as later critics such as George F. Kennan would have liked? The answer is not that Wilson was a hopeless idealist, oblivious to the potential consequences of the war. The answer is, rather, that Wilson envisioned a solution which he believed would be even better both for our security and for our ideals than an Allied victory. That was the prospect of a mediated peace, a peace molded by Americans in conformance with American interests and standards. This leads to the second point regarding Wilson's attitude toward the war.

Wilson preferred a mediated, compromise peace to an Allied victory. If one or the other side *had* to win, Wilson preferred that it be the Allies. However, Wilson feared the consequences of an Allied victory; a fear, it should be added,



which was born out in the selfish and vengeful approach of the Allies to the peace negotiations at Versailles. Wilson feared that a complete victory for the Allies would result in a European-style peace, a peace in which the victor imposed terms so unfair on the vanquished that they would be cause for another war. It must be remembered that, although Wilson viewed Allied governments and principles as *better than* Germany's (with the possible exception of Russia), he still viewed them as essentially backward and inferior to our own. Although he feared the consequences if the balance were to shift in Germany's favor, he saw the whole notion of basing peace on a balance of power as flawed. As Frank Ninkovich observes, the advent of "total war" "suggested that the European balance of power, formerly the fulcrum of world politics, had been permanently unhinged, beyond the possibility of redemption." It meant, further, that war "had become so destructive and socially disruptive that it was far too costly a means for achieving any ends that might conceivably be gained from military action." In the newly "cataclysmic" world which Wilson faced, peace was truly an *urgent* priority.<sup>27</sup>

Real peace, Wilson believed, would depend on the undoing of old world methods of territory-grabbing, imperialistic adventures, trade wars, hostile alliances and secretive treaties. In other words, real peace would depend upon the imposition of American values. That, he believed, could best be achieved by American mediation, not by an allied victory. Our mediation, in turn, would only be accepted if the United States took the stance of a true neutral. The stance of a true neutral, in turn, required that we did *not*, as Kennan and Lansing would have liked, enunciate principles which explicitly favored the Allied side.

It is within this context that Wilson's most famous pronouncements as the involved-neutral must be understood. On May 27, 1916, Wilson made a speech in Washington in which he first expressed support for the idea of a League of Nations. Regarding the war, he proclaimed, "With its causes and objects we are not concerned. The obscure fountains from which its stupendous flood has burst forth we are not interested to search for or explore."<sup>28</sup> His following words, however, revealed that we *were* concerned with the objects of the war. We simply wanted to replace the objects of the enemies and Allies with objects of our own. We had to look into the future and realize "the great moral necessity for an association to preserve the peace." The peace had to be molded on the basis of these objects:

First, that every people has a right to choose the sovereignty under which they shall live. . . . Second, that the small states of the world have a right to enjoy the same respect for their sovereignty and for their territorial integrity that great and powerful nations expect and insist upon. And, that the world has a right to be free from every disturbance of its peace that has its origins in aggression and disregard of the rights of peoples and nations.<sup>29</sup>

On January 27, 1917, Wilson would add to these principles the idea that "peace must be a peace without victory":

Victory would mean peace forced upon the loser, a victor's terms imposed upon the vanquished. It would be accepted in humiliation, under duress, at an intolerable sacrifice, and would leave a sting, a resentment, a bitter memory upon which terms of peace would rest, not permanently, but only as upon quicksand. Only a peace between equals can last. Only a peace the very principle of which is equality and a common participation in the common benefit.<sup>30</sup>

Again, Wilson's reluctance to advocate an Allied victory did not imply a lack of concern for the "security" of democracy. Rather, the lack of a victory of force might give American ideals the opportunity to prevail. For, in that speech, Wilson cited as principles upon which a compromise peace might rest those *democratic* principles which characterized the American nation: No peace could last or ought to last which did not "recognize and accept the principle that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that no right anywhere exists to hand peoples about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property." For the first time, Wilson advocated a "united and autonomous Poland." He was beginning to apply these principles specifically to the particular territorial and political dilemmas created by the upheaval of war.

Clearly, Wilson was not ignoring the fate of democracy. Rather, he was the first president to make the *proliferation* of democracy a primary principle of American foreign policy. He implored Americans to accept the challenge:

It is inconceivable that the people of the United States should play no part in that great enterprise. To take part in such a service will be the opportunity for which they have sought to prepare themselves by the very principles and purposes of their polity and the approved practices of their Government ever since the days when they set up a new nation in the high and honorable hope that it might, in all that it was and did, show mankind the way to liberty.<sup>31</sup>

Two points have been made regarding Wilson's attitude toward the war. The first is that if he *had* to choose, Wilson would prefer an Allied victory to a victory for the Central Powers. The second is that he favored a mediated peace to an Allied victory. His attitude presupposed his desire to serve, protect and extend democracy in the most efficacious way possible. These points lead logically to the third.

If attempts to create a compromise peace under the aegis of the United States failed, the only solution might be to enter the war on the Allied side. The realization that each side was determined to fight to the finish and that the attempt to promote democratic ends and to make American influence predominate had failed were major factors in Wilson's decision to lead his country into war. Let us review briefly, then, the various failed attempts of the involved-neutral to promote its ends.

As soon as war broke out, Wilson issued proclamations of neutrality. However, as Ray Stannard Baker puts it, a "merely inactive position" was "intoler-

able" in Wilson's mind.<sup>32</sup> Wilson immediately sent a message to the belligerent powers which stated:

As official head of one of the powers signatory to the Hague Convention, I feel it to be my privilege and my duty under Article three of the Convention to say to you in a spirit of most earnest friendship that I should welcome an opportunity to act in the interest of European peace, either now or at any other time that might be thought more suitable, as an occasion to serve you and all conceived in a way that would afford me lasting cause for gratitude and happiness.<sup>33</sup>

All the governments responded that they were in the right, a clear indication that they intended to seek a resolution on the battlefields, not in the conference room.

As both sides began to violate American rights, Wilson began to protest. Both sides responded to those protests, however, by blaming their illegal activities on the illegal activities of the other side. Thus, Wilson's ability to mediate between the two sides seemed to depend upon obtaining an agreement that one would stop doing this if the other stopped doing that. For example, the British would stop their "blockade of starvation" against Germany if Germany would stop its "inhumane" practices in Belgium and France. Hatred and distrust on each side made the possibilities for such an agreement remote.

Wilson's chances for promoting accord in Europe were lessened not only by the inimical positions of the Europeans but also by the nature of American neutrality. As Arthur S. Link points out, neutrality, in Wilson's day, meant:

Accepting duties as well as claiming privileges, and the observance of a body of international practices and laws that had been built up over centuries. A neutral nation, for example, was ordinarily (that is unless some larger national purposes demanded action otherwise) obliged to sell food and materials, even munitions to all comers.

It also had:

To respect the right of belligerents to prevent the flow of contraband to the enemy and could not ordinarily forbid its citizens from sending money or selling goods to the belligerents. In addition, a neutral was obliged to see that it didn't use its territories and port facilities for purposes of war.<sup>34</sup>

These tenets compounded the difficulty which the American neutral had in remaining neutral "in spirit," for it was the Allied side which needed to borrow money from us and to buy the armaments of war. In addition, it was Allied interference with our trade and shipping which, by these tenets, we had no choice but to accept.

The Wilson administration's tacit acceptance of the British contention that interference by belligerents with neutral trade was justified when "manifestly an imperative necessity" weakened the U.S. position as a neutral. The British trans-

gressed against our shipping frequently, interfering with our right to sell ordinary goods to civilian populations of belligerent countries and, as a result, damaging our economy. Although they were careful to pay for suspected cargoes when they seized them, their attempt to create a blockade around Germany caused them to stop shipments of food, cotton and other commodities. They took our cargoes into their ports and caused us costly delays. In addition, they imposed severe limitations on the trade of neutrals adjacent to the Central Powers. Wilson did protest against these violations of American rights, but he did not threaten the Allies, nor did he attempt to gain some agreement regarding *their* behavior before agreeing that the United States would supply them with arms and loans. This hesitancy to use material means of persuasion would recur.<sup>35</sup>

In September 1914, the German Ambassador to the United States, Count Bernstorff, hinted that the Germans might accept an offer for mediation. This overture leaked to the press and, of course, was publicly rebuffed by all sides. The Allied response made it clear that they would accept no peace without defeat of the Germans. Wilson heeded the advice of Ambassador Page and Colonel House and neglected to use the fear that the Allies would then have had of an embargo on arms to pressure the Allies to change their mind.<sup>36</sup> Wilson probably made his decision based on the fact that any offer would be regarded as favoring the side that desired peace at the moment (in this case, the Germans, whom he could least afford to favor), and on the basis of Page's prediction of a drawn war.<sup>37</sup>

Instead, Wilson agreed to House's scheme for an "exploratory mission" to Europe. Although placing only faint hope in House's mission, Wilson permitted him to plunge into a series of secret conversations with the British, German and Austro-Hungarian ambassadors. Much has been written about House's pro-Allied stance which rendered his mission ineffectual from the start. Much has also been said about the strange influence House had upon the president. Wilson seemed to trust that House's thoughts and plans were the same as his own and so, in this mission and others, failed to give House detailed instructions.

House began his mission in England, where he ignored Ambassador Gerard's pleas to come to Germany as soon as possible for the Germans were then amenable to peace proposals but it might soon be "too late."<sup>38</sup> The prospect of Germany agreeing to a compromise peace was the most favorable since the beginning of the war. Early in 1915, it was clear that Italy would go over to the side of the Entente. Bulgaria, on the other hand, had not yet joined the Central Powers. England had control of the seas while the seas were closed to Germany. In addition, Germany's plan to subdue Paris within six weeks and then turn to Russia had failed.

Wilson, apparently recognizing the opportunity, expressed interest to House and pledged to do what he could to influence Germany through Bernstorff. But House, who was being charmed by Sir Edward Grey and Page, decided on a policy of delay. Wilson wrote, criticizing him for his dilatory behavior, but, largely due to the replies of House and Page that "the time was not opportune"

for peace proposals, gave up hope of an immediate opening for peace.<sup>39</sup> Wilson failed to adequately question House's advice.

Faced with diminishing prospects of a compromise peace amenable to German interests, the Germans exhibited a heightened resolve for victory. Realizing that they must either win or lose, they decided to launch a submarine war against Allied merchant shipping around the British Isles. They warned that even neutral ships might be destroyed because it was not always possible to distinguish between neutral and belligerent ships. The United States, in turn, warned against this. The British and French retaliated by saying that they would henceforth prohibit *all* trade—even commerce in innocent goods—from travelling to and from the Central Powers. When the *Lusitania* was sunk, killing 124 Americans, Wilson appealed to the Germans to give up submarine warfare, but refused, as Bryan wished him to do, to protest simultaneously against the Allied blockade (above). The Germans ultimately agreed to prevent submarine warfare against unarmed passenger liners, and to warn and evacuate commercial liners before sinking them.

Soon after this pledge, however, the British liner *Arabic* was mistaken by the Germans as a cargo ship and sunk without warning or evacuation. This led to renewed American protestations and to the "*Arabic* Pledge," in which the Germans promised that no liners would be sunk without warning and without provisions being made for the safety of the passengers and the crew. The American neutral was thus faced with increased violations of its neutral rights by the Allies, and with German violations of the "rights of humanity" which were mitigated only by precarious pledges which might be abandoned at any moment.

Under these circumstances, Wilson began to support preparedness measures in case the United States should be forced into war. He also decided to send House on another mission to Europe. House, he agreed, should go to London, Paris and Berlin to sound out the possibilities of peace on the basis of disarmament and a postwar League of Nations. (Again, he failed to give him specific instructions.) Grey had intimated that the Allies might accept U.S. mediation if the United States would agree to join a postwar League to keep the peace.

It was on this trip that the famous "House-Grey Memorandum" was forged. In this memorandum dated February 22, 1916, a plan was devised for pressuring Germany to agree to a peace based on American principles. The president was, when Grey considered the moment propitious for mediation, to notify Germany of his purpose to intervene and stop this destructive war. He was to present Germany with a settlement which, unbeknownst to the Germans, had hitherto been agreed to by the Allies. If Germany did not accept this proposal, House agreed with Grey, "it would probably be necessary for us to join the allies and force the issue."<sup>40</sup> There is reason to believe that, in agreeing to this memorandum, Wilson reserved the option to interpret this promise for intervention to mean "moral" rather than military intervention.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, this memorandum is interesting for revealing the circumstances under which Wilson was willing at least to *consider* going to war on the Allied side.

Under this scheme, the United States would not go to war simply for Allied war aims. Rather, it would forge an agreement with the Allies concerning the *kind* of settlement Germany would be required to accept. In other words, this scheme would allow Wilson to influence the objects of the war, rather than being drawn into a war “whose objects do not concern us.”

This point is extremely important for understanding the process by which the United States finally succumbed to war. If the United States were going to enter the war, Wilson preferred that it enter it for the sake of its own principles and goals. Although he has been criticized for defining our grievances in terms of the “freedom of the seas,” Wilson tried to *avoid* the trap of being drawn into the war for the sake of this dictum. He feared that if we entered the war for the sake of some violation to our rights rather than for the sake of a general plan of peace to which we had gotten the Allies to agree, we would become mere pawns in a European power struggle; precisely that which Washington had warned us to avoid.

If we understand this, we are able to understand Wilson’s hesitancy to go to war over the *Sussex* Affair: In spite of their pledges to us, on March 24, 1916, the Germans torpedoed the French steamer *Sussex*. It had neither armaments nor explosives and had never been used as a troopship. Ironically, both Lansing and House, who had opposed the emphasis on “freedom of the seas,” leaned toward war, while Wilson, who had emphasized the principle, rejected this solution. What he did do was to send a note threatening to sever diplomatic relations “until” the German government announced its purpose to discontinue such acts. In addition, he typed out a memorandum for House to send to Grey, indicating that a break might come soon and that the time to act upon the House-Grey memorandum was now.

The Allies, however, wanted to avoid precisely that which Wilson wanted to assure: Although they were anxious to have the United States enter the war on their side, they preferred that it enter for the sake of its rights rather than for the sake of an agreement which would compel them to mitigate their ambitions and accept American ideas regarding the “objects” of war and the treatment of Germany. Thus, they neglected to act upon Wilson’s suggestion, hoping that the United States would be drawn into the war *without* having tied the Entente Powers to its goals.

Forceful notes to Germany resulted in the “*Sussex*, Pledge,” in which Germany accepted the principle of “visit and search” and said that new orders had been issued to its submarine commanders. Germany added, however, that it could not practice unlimited restraint if the enemy was disregarding international law. This note was satisfactory to Wilson but not to Lansing, who convinced him in his reply accepting German compliance with U.S. demands to include a statement that compliance could in no way be considered conditional upon the practices of the French and British.

The *Sussex* Pledge brought in a brief period in which the Germans refrained from the illegal aspects of submarine warfare while Allied insults to our honor

and our interests grew worse. England blacklisted our ships, seized our neutral mail and interfered with the attempts of our Red Cross to transfer hospital supplies—all in the name of the “necessities” of war.

More than ever, Wilson became convinced that a compromise peace under the aegis of the United States was to be preferred to that of an Allied victory. With new energy and determination, he used words as weapons, weapons designed to conquer not only the Americans but also the Europeans. Indeed, leaders around the world were responding to Wilson’s rhetoric by wooing the public with Wilsonian-sounding principles of their own. Acknowledging this in an address before the League to Enforce Peace on May 27, 1916, Wilson declared:

If this war has accomplished nothing else for the benefit of the world, it has at least disclosed a great moral necessity and set forward the thinking of the statesmen of the world by a whole age. Repeated utterances of the leading statesmen of most of the great nations now engaged in war have made it plain that their thought has come to this, that the principle of right must henceforth take precedence over the individual interests of particular nations, and that the nations of the world must in some way band themselves together to see that the right prevails as against any sort of selfish aggression; that henceforth alliance must not set up against alliance, understanding against understanding, but that there must be common agreement for a common object and that at the heart of the common object must lie the inviolable rights of peoples and of mankind.<sup>42</sup>

Wilson continued:

This is undoubtedly the thought of America. This is what we ourselves will say when there comes the proper time to say it. In the dealings of nations with one another arbitrary force must be rejected and we must move forward to the thought of the modern world, the thought of which peace is the very atmosphere. That thought constitutes a chief part of the passionate conviction of America.<sup>43</sup>

Wilson concluded this important speech by repeating those principles which he emphasized so often having to do with government by consent, and the rights of small nations and of every nation to live in peace, free from aggression and exploitation. With an emphasis on duty and an admonishment against selfishness, Wilson prodded Americans to join a “League of Nations” to preserve those principles which America considered to be universal and sacred. He reiterated that the United States wanted nothing for itself that other nations had and that we were willing to limit ourselves, along with other countries, “to a prescribed course of duty and respect for the rights of others which will check any selfish passion of our own as it will check any aggressive impulse of theirs.”

As Harley Notter points out, the League of Nations idea can be seen as a worldwide projection of American federalism.<sup>44</sup> Just as a given state was to be prevented from violent transgressions against other states by the fear that all the other states would band against it, so each nation would harbor that fear re-

garding other nations if all nations were united in a League to prevent aggression. So too, the American distaste for militarism was “internationalized” in Wilson’s suggestions for disarmament down to the bare minimum needed for policing purposes. And, of course, the principles of government by consent and of foreign policies which respected the self-determination of other peoples were none other than the principles which guided (if they did not always determine) our own domestic and foreign policies. Our involvement in the world was to be circumscribed by our own perspective, even though that perspective was grounded in our philosophy of *universal* principles and rights.

Clearly, although Wilson wanted to avoid war with Germany, he did not want to avoid involvement in Europe. Wilson’s words indicated in no uncertain terms that the time for aloofness was over. In another pivotal speech at Omaha, on October 5, 1916, Wilson went so far as to reinterpret Washington’s prohibition against entanglements. In the new interpretation, involvement in the quarrels of Europe was not in itself bad. What was bad was to be involved for the sake of the (often “selfish”) purposes of the Europeans:

But Europe ought not to misunderstand us. We are holding off, not because we do not feel concerned, but because when we exert the force of the Nation we want to know what we are exerting it for. You know that we have always remembered and revered the advice of the great Washington, who advised us to avoid foreign entanglements. By that I understand him to mean avoid being entangled in the ambitions and the national purposes of other nations. . . . It does not mean if I may be permitted to venture an interpretation of the meaning of that great man—that we are to avoid the entanglements of the world, and nothing that concerns the whole world can be indifferent to us.<sup>45</sup>

By reinterpreting Washington’s prohibition against entanglements in this way, Wilson “transvaluated” a traditional tenet of American foreign policy. The idea of American uniqueness remained; our principles still distinguished us. However, our uniqueness no longer required that we remain apart. On the contrary, it compelled us to action. Before, our exceptional status had provided a reason for distance; we wanted to avoid being tainted by “their” views and drawn into their petty political squabbles. By keeping apart, we gave ourselves the time and the freedom to perfect our democracy, to expand our economy and our territory and generally to grow more powerful and secure. Now, however, “distance” was impossible. Our economy had expanded into every part of the world. It had become dependent upon sales of munitions and supplies to the Allies. It had been injured by the belligerents’ interference with our trade. In this increasingly interconnected world, our democracy could no longer hope to be immune to European ideas and politics.

Nor, Wilson believed, should we be immune; as an enlightened and powerful member of the world, we should accept our responsibility. Thus, the idea of *power through unity with the world* began to replace the idea of power through detachment from it. Our strength and viability as a democracy—our very



uniqueness—depended upon our ability to mobilize world opinion and to unite it with our own. Wilson insisted:

Force will not accomplish anything that is permanent, I venture to say, in the great struggle which is going on on the other side of the sea. The permanent things will be accomplished afterwards, when the opinion of mankind is brought to bear upon the issue and the only thing that will hold the world steady is the same silent, insistent, all-powerful opinion of mankind.<sup>46</sup>

We had to reevaluate the meaning of our uniqueness. The fact that we perhaps held a more enlightened view of the world than the Europeans and that the Europeans were currently submitting to the disastrous consequences of their own worldview meant that there were great possibilities for sharing that which was best in ourselves. To Wilson, this appeared as a moral duty as well as a political necessity; we were to become involved in the world insofar as we were to lead and teach. Thus, we were to become a part insofar as we were to become a unique part, offering special services while maintaining our special character. What Washington's prohibition against entanglements now meant was that we were never to follow any path other than our own. Wilson went so far in reinterpreting Washington's warning that he seemed to suggest that even a temporary military alliance with Europeans might be acceptable so long as it served our own high principles and goals. Whereas, previously, we had to avoid alliances in order to enhance our democracy, now an alliance might be the only way to maximize our influence upon the Europeans and to minimize their influence upon us.

In the ideas Wilson advocated during the final stages of the Neutrality Period, we see just how inseparable the notions of "involvement" and "influence" had become. Unfortunately, it would prove formidable for the United States to become involved in Europe without becoming involved in *its* purposes and methods. Difficulties were evident even before the United States declared war on Germany. For example, Wilson could not condone the balance of power as a guide for foreign policy. He saw the obsession with a geopolitical solution to the world's problems as not only contrary to the American way but also as a major reason for the advent of the war. And yet, he realized that the United States could not simply ignore the consequences for itself if the balance in Europe were to shift in Germany's favor. The United States ultimately went to war in part to prevent this from occurring.

Wilson solved the contradiction by setting a larger goal beyond the immediate one: Once the German autocracy was defeated, under the aegis of American influence, Europe would be reconstructed on the basis of a "new world order" in which a League of Nations and not the balance of power would provide for each nation's security. The United States would shift the balance to the Allies' favor only in order to render balance-of-power tactics obsolete.

Neither could Wilson condone militarism and the exaltation of force. Force,

he still insisted, ignored opinion and signaled an inability to gain the support of the people through enlightened ideas and just tactics. Militarism, he intoned, was the pursuit of interest without reason or justice, and ultimately damaging to the interest it pursued; for power based on force rather than on agreement and consent was precarious; with the will of the people against them, no government or leader was secure. Still, the obvious fact that force would affect the *kind* of world this war bequeathed to us meant that Wilson had to qualify this assertion, by distinguishing between force used for "aggressive" and "selfish" purposes and force used in the service of democracy or in defense of the "rights of mankind." Wilson had made this qualification before: He chose to use the physical power of the United States when his unselfish purposes seemed incapable of being achieved in any other way. He saw power as a responsibility which could either be used well and carefully, abused or ignored. Frederick S. Calhoun points out, however, that Wilson limited the use of force to specific ends, reverting to different forms of power (such as diplomatic, economic and moral) once those ends were achieved.<sup>47</sup> This idea of restraint and circumscription would be tested and frustrated by the ensuing battle.

Wilson was coming to the conclusion that the enhancement and defense of democracy might be achieved through no other means than the exertion of greater force. Thus, the "progressive" president was compelled to violate the progressive tenet of disarmament and to launch and defend the "preparedness" movement. At Kansas City, on February 2, 1916, Wilson declared, "Modern wars are not won by mere numbers. They are not won by mere national spirit." They were, he said, "won by the scientific application of irresistible force." Our navy had to be brought "to a state of efficiency and of numerical strength which will make it practically impregnable to the navies of the world."<sup>48</sup> The element of pathos lay in the fact that the force which Wilson would increasingly rely upon cohered with his negative definition of force in general; it did indeed signal Wilson's inability to gain his ends through the demonstration of enlightened ideas and just tactics. In certain ways, we had to adapt to the world even as we sought to change it.

The fact that the United States would not be able to enter the war on its own terms would be an especially poignant indication that involvement in Europe would include vitiation. I have suggested that Wilson did not want to go to war over the *Sussex* Affair in part because he preferred, if we had to go to war with Germany, to do so on the basis of an agreement with the Allies regarding the *basis* for peace and the refusal of the Germans to comply with that basis. The Allies, on the other hand, hoped that the United States *would* be drawn into the war due to submarine warfare. This would leave them with their hands free regarding the objects of war. With this in mind, let us turn to the final stages of the Neutrality Period.

In late 1916, the Germans, impatient with a stalemated war and exhausted by the relentless British blockade, became determined either to make peace or to bring the war to a hasty conclusion through the renewal of submarine warfare.

The forced resignation of Gottlieb Von Jagow, German Minister of Foreign Affairs, who had been the chief opponent in Berlin of unrestricted submarine warfare, revealed that the path was clear for pursuing the second option.<sup>49</sup> It was the Entente Powers who, at this stage, opposed suggestions for peace, while the Germans hinted at a willingness to talk. With Germany occupying Belgium and northern France, the Allies feared that any peace agreed to by the Central Powers would be harsh and uncompromising.

Facing the likelihood that submarine warfare would be renewed if he did not, Wilson himself decided to make a peace move. In late November, he prepared a draft of a note to all belligerents asking them to state their war aims. Robert Lansing reports in his *War Memoirs* that "This was not done to obtain knowledge of facts but in order to furnish the President with official statements of such facts upon which he could prepare a formal offer to the powers at war to mediate between them, and which would at the same time furnish bases for the negotiation which he intended to suggest."<sup>50</sup> Lansing was against the sending of such a note because the unacceptable answer might come from the "belligerents we could least afford to see defeated."<sup>51</sup> He and House urged Wilson to delay.

The Germans, who had word that an American initiative was imminent, grew tired of waiting. On December 12, 1916, they preempted Wilson by presenting a peace proposal of their own. (The proposal, according to Colonel House, permitted the interpretation "that Germany would consider no peace that was not one of victory.")<sup>52</sup> In making his offer, German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollwegg robbed Wilson's forthcoming initiative of the "unembarrassed neutrality which Wilson needed to secure a fair hearing from the Allies," and gave the Allies the excuse to reject Wilson's offer.<sup>53</sup>

In spite of the appearance of collaboration with Germany, which his proposal would now have, Wilson did send a message on December 18, asking for peace terms on the basis of "rights alike of the weak and strong." The Allied reply reflected their conviction that a durable peace presupposed a satisfactory military settlement of the conflict. Even the German reply was indefinite, indicating that they wanted to make peace on their own terms.<sup>54</sup>

In a final attempt to preserve American neutrality and to forge a compromise peace, Wilson decided to appeal over the heads of the leaders to the people themselves. On January 22, 1917, he made a pivotal speech stating the terms which he believed would create a lasting peace and pressured the Germans and the Allies to accept them. Those terms were first, that the peace should be a "peace without victory," a fair and just peace, and second, that the just settlement should be guaranteed by the creation of a League of Nations. An equitable peace had to rest upon an equality of rights for large and small nations alike and upon the principle of the consent of the governed, that principle here being emphasized both in relation to internal governmental structures and in relation to foreign rule. Wilson argued, "No peace can last, or ought to last, which does not recognize and accept the principle that governments derive all their just powers

from the consent of the governed, and that no right exists anywhere to hand people about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property.”<sup>55</sup> In addition, every great people had to be assured a “direct outlet to the great highways of the sea” while the paths of the sea had to be free. Finally, armaments had to be limited so that the possibilities for aggression would be reduced. Wilson declared: “These are American principles, American policies; We could stand for no others. And they are also the principles and policies of forward looking men and women everywhere, of every modern nation, of every enlightened community. They are the principles of mankind and must prevail.”<sup>56</sup>

Wilson’s address received accolades in the American press. As Thomas J. Knock documents, the progressive internationalists were especially effusive. Herbert Croly wrote to Wilson predicting that the address would “reverberate throughout history.” Lillian Wald, Oswald Garrison Villard, Paul Kellogg and Amos Pinchot stated that Wilson had rendered “a service to all humanity which it is impossible to exaggerate.” Comparisons were made to the Declaration of Independence and to the Gettysburg Address.<sup>57</sup>

The response of both the Allied and Entente Powers indicated that they understood the power of Wilson’s words, and dared not overtly disparage them. Since the address did not constitute a formal diplomatic proposal, the belligerent governments did not have to issue an official response. Under continued bombardment from the German and Austrian armies, Russia did give an official response, embracing Wilson’s program in its entirety. In the Allied press, the predominant view was that Wilson’s principles were admirable, but naive and unattainable, so long as the German autocracy was undefeated. But progressive groups responded more enthusiastically. The French Socialist Party and the British Labour Party applauded Wilson’s speech. The latter went so far as to pass a unanimous resolution calling for “the formation of an international League to enforce the Maintenance of Peace on the plan advocated by the President of the United States.” “Nationalities” throughout Central and Eastern Europe responded eagerly to Wilson’s words. Knock interprets these responses incisively: Wilson’s address “had opened the floodgates of an ensuing international debate on war aims and—in spite of the obduracy of the belligerent governments themselves—caused the first cracks in the political truces within and among the Allied countries.”<sup>58</sup>

The German government made a grave mistake in ignoring Count Bernstorff’s advice that they accept these “American principles” as a basis for peace, and that they respond to Wilson’s request for terms in a positive and moderate way. Had they chosen to do so, they would have partially redeemed themselves in Wilson’s eyes and put the Entente governments on the defensive. Sir Edward Grey writes in his memoirs:

If she had accepted the Wilson policy, and was ready to agree to the Conference, the Allies could not have refused. They were dependent on American supplies; They could not have risked the ill-will of the Government of the United States, still less a rapproche-

ment between the United States and Germany. Germans have only to reflect upon the peace they might have had in 1916 as compared with the Peace of 1919.<sup>59</sup>

It was obvious to the Germans after the failure of the peace notes of December that they were not going to achieve their own ends through negotiation. On January 9, the Germany military, having gained the upper hand, made the fatal decision to renew submarine warfare. Wilhelm's advisers argued that the Allied response to Wilson's and Bethmann Hollweg's peace notes made their intention of unconditional victory clear, and that Germany's only chance for victory lay in making war on ships of every flag.

House reported that Wilson was "sad and depressed."<sup>60</sup> Wilson waited for overt acts before declaring war, however, cherishing the hope that negotiations with Germany's ally, Austria-Hungary, would lead to a "separate peace" which would force Germany to accept Wilson's terms. In February, overt acts occurred as German submarines sank two British passenger liners, the *Laconia* and the *Algonquin*. On the day after the sinking of the *Laconia* with the loss of two American lives, Wilson learned of a secret plot: Arthur Zimmerman, the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had attempted to convince Mexico to declare war on the United States in the event of an American declaration of war against Germany. The "lost provinces" of Arizona, New Mexico and Texas had been held out as inducements! When the plot behind the Zimmerman note was made public, American opinion became much more amenable to war. When, in March, German submarines sank three American merchant ships, war became inevitable.

Wilson had cherished the hope of creating an American-inspired peace. He had hoped that if the United States did go to war it would be for the sake of its own broad objectives and principles. Nevertheless, Wilson had made it clear that we would, if forced to, go to war for the sake of "the rights of mankind." With American lives taken, Wilson now believed that war was the only response which would bring justice and restore our honor and prestige. In addition, now that the German autocracy was bent on victory, the interests of our democracy required that we enter the war to prevent the fulfillment of German goals.

Wilson's hopes of influencing Europe through an involved-neutrality were disappointed. With the demise of his favorite option, that of a mediated peace, he turned to his second option, that of helping the Allies to defeat Germany. It now seemed that the only way to exert our influence was to fight "their" war while trying to steer it into "our" democratic and humane channels.

Wilson had indicated all along that we would not go to war for the sake of our interests alone. Now, he indicated that neither would we withdraw the moment our interests were satisfied. If the world were not ready to follow the principles of democracy and justice, we would fight a war to so thoroughly defeat the enemy, and which would put the Allies in such need of our assistance after the war that the peace would, in a sense, be molded after us. After the war the United States would "take her place in the world of finance and commerce

upon a scale that she never dreamed of before."<sup>61</sup> Economic interaction would facilitate our mission by "releasing the intelligence of America for the service of mankind."<sup>62</sup> Wilson hoped that if the United States promoted free trade and the Open Door while spreading its liberal values, nations would realize their mutually beneficial relationship with each other, so that they would be more likely to live in harmony and peace. Such, anyway, were his hopes as he plunged the United States into a war which it did not create and it did not want.

Although some have described the Neutrality Period in terms of traditional isolation and aloofness from European politics; in terms of a typical American selfishness and unwillingness to involve itself in other peoples' struggles; in terms of a typical idealism which allowed us to ignore the enormous stakes for our security in the outcome of the war; or in terms of a typical materialism which compelled us to favor the Allies whose purchases stimulated our economy, it is by now evident that none of these descriptions suffices. Wilson had maintained the idea of American uniqueness, but he had discovered that the key to America's exceptional status was no longer aloofness, but involvement. Wilson did display an American respect for moderation and order in the face of the new technology of mass destruction and a war of cataclysmic proportions; but he saw that if democracy were to defend itself against those who would exert force against it, democracy itself would have to be well armed. Wilson did summon up traditional American ideals to oppose the trends of militarism, bellicosity and greed. However, he saw military might as a viable tool in the pursuit of ends he considered just. Neutrality befitted our tradition of restraint from imperialistic aggression. We were, nevertheless, aggressive in our own way. As the involved-neutral, Wilson used our moral standing and our prestige as a world power in energetic pursuit of an American-inspired peace.

Saying that Wilson limited the use of force to specific goals does not discount the fact that the goals he set for his country were unprecedented in their breadth and in the extent to which he used force to achieve them. Wilson energized the American mission, defining it not only in terms of setting a democratic example, but also in terms of extending democratic principles and practices to others. He reiterated the importance of unselfishness, insisting even more strongly that America consider the problems of others. In the United States and in Europe, people were listening to Wilson's ideas and reevaluating their own.

It is true that the influence which Wilson valued most stemmed from moral persuasion and constructive deeds. He reiterated that the influence of force frequently resulted in hatred and distrust and, ultimately, in the dissolution of influence. But Wilson had come to believe that the assertion of all-out force was a necessary means toward clearing the world of pernicious influences so that we could inject a meliorative alternative. In this sense, the war was a deviation from Wilson's principles even though it was fought for the sake of them; the war would contradict the democratic and pacifistic goals for which it was fought.

As much as Wilson wanted our involvement in the war to reflect our own ideas, the fact that we were to join the Allies in a common struggle meant that

we would have to find common ground. This requirement would test and strain our ideals as they had never been tested and strained before, for it would reveal whether we could prevent an all-encompassing deviation from our ideals from becoming the norm. Beyond the issue of defeating Germany, the crucial issue was: Would we become more like them or would they become more like us?

## *Chapter 3*

# American Principles on Trial: Words Accompany Arms to the Battlefield

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The position of America in this war is so clearly avowed that no man can be excused for mistaking it. She seeks no material profit or aggrandizement of any kind. She is fighting for no advantage or selfish object of her own but for the liberation of peoples everywhere from the aggressions of autocratic force. (Wilson's Message to the Provisional Government of Russia, May 22, 1917)

I have been unable to escape the conviction that all countries opposed to Germany in this war, except ourselves, are jealous and suspicious of one another. They believe, however, in the sincerity and unselfishness of the United States; and feeling thus, they are not only willing for the United States to take the lead in matters which affect our common cause; but they are really anxious that we should dominate the entire Allied situation, both in regards to active belligerent operations against the enemy, and economically. (Admiral Benson to Wilson, December 1917)

We would have to adapt to the world while trying to improve it, to provide for the necessities of the war while looking beyond them. We would have to maximize our influence upon the Europeans while minimizing their influence upon us. The American republic was on the defensive as well as the offensive because many things sacred to it seemed threatened. The aggressive German state seemed to threaten its democratic political structure and ideals, its non-militaristic way of life, and even its existence. Germany was viewed as both an ideological and a geopolitical threat.

In order to eliminate that threat, Americans had to engage in European geopolitics and mingle with Europeans whose ideologies differed from their own.



One of the biggest questions facing the United States as it entered the war was whether it could prevent the imperatives of war from leading it to degradation and diminution. Wilson struggled to preserve that which was best in America even as he convinced Americans to accept radically new responsibilities and objectives.

Wilson had come to consider involvement in Europe to be less a threat to our identity than a way of protecting it (above). In a poignant second inaugural address, just prior to his declaration of war, Wilson suggested that participation in the war need not mean vitiation so long as we held onto those principles which distinguished us:

We may even be drawn, by circumstances, not by our own purpose or desire, to a more active assertion of our rights as we see them and a more immediate association with the great struggle itself. But nothing will alter our thought or our purpose. They are too clear to be obscured. They are too deeply rooted in the principles of our national life to be altered. We desire neither conquest nor advantage. We wish nothing that can be had only at the cost of another people. We have always professed unselfish purpose and we covet the opportunity to prove that our professions are sincere.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, Wilson indicated, those same principles now *compelled* us to become involved. If we were to live up to our reputation and our character, we had to care about a civilization on the brink of disaster:

We realize that the greatest things that remain to be done must be done with the whole world for stage and in cooperation with the wide and universal forces of mankind, and we are making ourselves ready for these things. They will follow in the immediate wake of the war itself and will set civilization up again. We are provincials no longer. The tragical events of the thirty months of vital turmoil through which we have just passed have made us citizens of the world. There can be no turning back. Our own fortunes as a nation are involved, whether we would have it or not. . . . And yet we are not the less Americans on that account. We shall be the more American if we but remain true to the principles in which we have been bred. They are not the principles of a province or of a single continent. We have known and boasted all along that they were the principles of a liberated mankind.<sup>2</sup>

Wilson went on to enunciate “the things we shall stand for *whether in war or peace*”: That “peace cannot securely or justly rest upon an armed balance of power”; “that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed and that no other powers should be supported by the common thought, purpose or power of the family of nations”; and “that the community of interest and of power upon which peace must henceforth depend imposes upon each nation the duty of seeing to it that all influences proceeding from its citizens meant to encourage or assist revolution in other states should be sternly and effectually suppressed and prevented.”<sup>3</sup>

Notable in these words is the depiction of the United States as both the

harbinger of freedom and democracy and the voice of moderation and prudence.<sup>4</sup> Wilson juxtaposed the balance-of-power approach with good sense; it would make the peace "neither just nor secure." Even though he supported the proliferation of democracy, he eschewed the "encouragement" of revolutions as a solution to political problems. He announced that we would seek neither conquest nor advantage at the same time as he indicated that we would not temporize in face of violations to our rights, and that we would be aggressively defend and promote democracy. He revealed that we would cooperate even as we "demanded" "fair dealing, justice and the freedom to live and be at ease against organized wrong."

We would prove to the world that moderation was compatible with freedom, that restraint was compatible with strength, that duty was compatible with interest, and that a world order based on international organization rather than an armed balance of power was compatible with security. The United States was to be the voice not only of progress and reform, but also of reason and calm.

Indeed, moderation and ambivalence were inherent in the American political tradition. Americans advocated neither autocracy nor communism, neither tyranny nor populism. They had a missionary zeal for democracy, but they rarely incited revolution. (This reluctance to foment revolution derived from the belief that democracy had to stem from the will of the people themselves, and from the fear of overextending American energy and resources.) They rejected state-sponsored religion but they were a pious people. They had espoused universal principles and tried to practice them even as they had recognized established governments whose principles differed from their own. They had generally opposed imperialism even as they had aggressively expanded U.S. territory. (Although some might call this hypocrisy rather than moderation, the fact is that ideological opposition to imperialism did temper the nature and the extent of that expansion.) They had not ignored their interests, but they had often tried to prevent interests from providing the excuse for wrongdoing.

In Wilson's mind, such qualities as these compelled Americans not only to defend their polity but also to dispense their rationality. As a powerful democracy which also happened to be the most reasonable and restrained of the powerful nations, the United States held a unique counterpoise to extremism. This was especially true when the world was submitting to the disastrous consequences of its own lack of temperance and restraint. Wilson's belief that the United States stood for the right principles while having the good sense and practical ability to carry them out contributed to his belief that we had to consider the problems of others who were less moderate, scrupulous and rational as our own problems. Regarding the League of Nations, Wilson thought it "inconceivable that the people of the United States should play no great part in that great enterprise."

As we became enemy and ally in an explosive and convulsive world war, the problems of others indeed became our own. However, it would prove exceedingly difficult to acquire the problems of others *as* our own without changing

the definition of our own. The demands on the United States as a participant in a brutal war made the exhibition of moderation and the application of universal principles difficult, and frequently unwise.

During the first year of American participation, we see the ironic intermingling of opposites, reflecting the extreme complexity of our position as "beneficent" Americans who were also "enemies" in a merciless war. We see the attempt to unify the world behind common beliefs and goals intermingling with the divisive portrayal of Germany as the center of all evil. We see the United States as benefactor and redeemer but also as uncompromising destroyer. We see an internationalism based on the dream of world harmony and peace intermingling with an unprecedented American association with the divisions of Europe. We hear Wilson extolling the universal application of democracy and yet we see him ready to make a separate peace with Germany's undemocratic allies. We see Wilson use very different standards and methods in responding to the undemocratic ways of the Russians than he used in responding to the undemocratic ways of the Germans. We witness the use of "force to the utmost" combined with talk of disarmament. We see traditional opposition to the balance of power combined with a willingness to participate in a League of Nations which increasingly had as one of its objects the creation of a front against aggression.

A close look at these dichotomies reveals that the conflicts within the American identity were not merely conflicts between Wilsonian idealism and European realism, nor did they merely reflect that unique American synthesis of idealism and practicality herein described; for they reflected a burgeoning tension *within* and *between* American principles, not just a combination of them. They reflected an *interaction* and *accommodation* with European ideals, not just an opposition to them.

In light of his policies and ideas before the war, it is easily possible to view Wilson as neither idealist nor realist (in the common senses of the terms) but rather as an advocate of the practical and the just, even if we disagree with his definition of those terms. Or rather, he advocated both our rights and our morals and viewed them as compatible. Wilson's idea that our interests are best served by fair play, in that fair play engenders admiration and trust, is a simple assertion of the compatibility of interests and ideals. During the war, however, the choices Wilson had to make became more grave, the consequences of each decision he made more acute. Although the realism/idealism dichotomy is often inadequate in the philosophical sense as well as in its common usage (above), some of the events of foreign policy are difficult to define without these categories, for certain situations require our government to violate those particular ideals to which it generally adheres and ascribes. Certain situations require the government to conduct itself in a way in which it itself would not normally condone; in a manner which it would prefer to view as a departure from its principles, and would prefer not to allow to become generalized into a norm.

During World War I, it became increasingly difficult for the United States to

define itself as the voice of reason. Surrounded by extremes, and needing to engage in certain extreme behavior ourselves, would we be able to preserve our identity and keep our bearings? In what way would the war change us? In what way would American participation change the character and terms of the war? (Wilson had indicated that as long as we held onto our guiding principles we could assume the role of leader and teacher with little fear of being corrupted by those whom we led and taught.) In order to answer these questions, let us examine four areas pertaining to the first year of America's participation in the "general" war: (1) the principles and policies Wilson at first expounded and employed in waging war against the Central Powers; (2) the relation of those principles and policies with earlier and later American principles and policies; (3) the relation of those principles and policies to European principles and policies; and (4) a comparison of these principles and policies with the principles and policies which Wilson expounded and employed in responding to Russian bolshevism.

Immediately and abruptly, upon declaring war, the tone of Wilson's rhetoric changed, naturally enough, from that of a neutral to that of the leader of a warring power. No longer the detached spectator offering advice, Wilson now focused his attention on Germany. In spite of his previous admonitions for moderation and gradualism in the extension of democracy, Wilson now made it clear that not just the defeating of Germany, but the overhaul of the German political system would be an object of this war. So far as the principle of democracy was concerned, Wilson indicated that there would be no compromise regarding it. Autocracy was portrayed as the cause of the war, democracy as its solution:

It was a war determined upon as wars used to be determined upon in the old unhappy days when peoples were nowhere consulted by their rulers and wars were provoked and waged in the interest of dynasties or of little groups of ambitious men who were accustomed to use their men as pawns and tools. Self-governed nations do not fill their neighbor states with spies or set the course of intrigue to bring about some critical posture of affairs, which will give them an opportunity to strike and make conquest.<sup>5</sup>

Wilson continued:

We are now about to accept gage [*sic*] of battle with this natural foe to liberty and shall, if necessary, spend the whole force of the Nation to check and nullify its pretensions and its power. We are glad to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its people, the German peoples included; for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy.<sup>6</sup>

Wilson portrayed our new mission against Germany as stemming naturally from our traditionally unselfish character. Even though the mission had turned violent, it was still a manifestation of American helpfulness toward others: "We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no

indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but the champions of mankind.”<sup>7</sup>

Wilson had stated that peace depended upon democracy before, but now he used that idea in a more aggressive, one might say extreme, fashion. This was so, first, in that he used Germany’s *lack* of democracy to impute to Germany sole responsibility for the war. Although some writers take Wilson’s charges against Germany at face value, there is strong reason to doubt that Wilson believed Germany to be *solely* to blame. Even as late as November 1916, he had to be convinced by Colonel House not to insert a sentence in his peace note which said that “the causes and objects of the war are obscure.”<sup>8</sup> Wilson had always disliked the German autocracy but his letters and papers reveal that he thought that the system of balance-of-power politics and imperialism, *of which the Allies were also a part*, had to share the blame. Now, however, the United States was joining the Allies, and for the sake of unity with them, for the sake of reforming them by melding their (sometimes undemocratic) purposes into his own, for the sake of demoralizing the enemy and energizing Americans, and finally, in order to justify the war, Wilson portrayed the war in terms of the opposition of extremes. The principle of democracy was pitted against the principle of autocracy in violent opposition.

Second, the principle of democracy was used aggressively in that it was used to defend the extreme goals of the war. Because there was no use fighting a war unless to create a stable and lasting peace and because democracy was viewed by Wilson as essential for peace and stability, he indicated that the United States would not stop fighting until it had caused the total demise of the German government. Whereas he had previously advocated a peace without victory, he now saw complete victory over the German autocracy as a prerequisite to any peace worth having. This stance was, of course, influenced by the fact that victory would now not only be an Allied victory but also an American one.

Whereas Wilson the neutral had sought to create a mediated peace, Wilson the war leader used the virtues of democracy and of the American democracy in particular to oppose compromise. The key to peace was the creation of a just world, not some bargain hammered out at the expense of true justice. This was especially so, Wilson believed, because Germany had shown *its* unwillingness to compromise. Compromising with the Germans would allow the German leaders the prestige which would enable them to maintain influence over their people. Thorough defeat of Germany would discredit German leaders and the German autocracy. In Washington on June 14, 1917, Wilson explained:

If they can secure peace now with the immense advantages still in their hands which they have up to this point apparently gained, they will have justified themselves before the German people. They will have gained by force what they promised to gain by it; an immense expansion of German power, an enlargement of German industrial and commercial opportunities. Their prestige will be secure, and with their prestige their political

power. If they fail, their people will thrust them aside; a government accountable to the people themselves will be set up in Germany as it has been in England, the United States, in France and in all great countries of modern times except Germany.<sup>9</sup>

By thus indicating that nothing less than the destruction of the German autocracy was acceptable, Wilson created a new criterion for the use of American power, viewed as force. His rhetoric implied that the *spreading* of democracy was a legitimate reason for war. Wilson's policies in Latin America, although manifesting the same goal, had a less dramatic effect on the definition of the American "mission" than his policies toward Germany because, in Latin America, Wilson had stopped just short of war. This was a *war* "to make the world safe for democracy."

Third, Wilson used the principle of democracy in a newly aggressive fashion in that he used it as a rhetorical means to inspire fighting enthusiasm. The depiction of the war as one between autocracy and democracy was seen to be that which would appeal most to Americans and inspire in them the most vigor on the battlefield. The Wiseman "Memorandum on American Cooperation," which was described by Wilson to be an "accurate summary," said:

The sentiment of the country would be strongly against joining the Allies by any formal treaty. Subconsciously they (the Americans) feel themselves to be arbitrators rather than Allies. On the other hand, the people are sincere in their determination to crush Prussian autocracy, and in their longing to arrive at some settlement which will make future wars impossible. . . . It is important to realize that the American people do not consider themselves in any danger from the Central Powers. It is true that many of their statesmen foresee the danger of a German triumph, but the majority of the people are still very remote from the war. . . . The Americans are accustomed to follow a simple formula. The President realized this when he gave them the watchword that America was fighting to make the world safe for Democracy; but the time has come when something more concrete and detailed is needed.<sup>10</sup>

The democratic ideal became a weapon on the battlefield, in addition, in that Wilson used it to discredit German leaders in the minds of German people, to raise German hopes for democratic reform and fair treatment in the event of an Allied victory, and thereby, to lessen German enthusiasm for fighting the war. Thus, the principle of democracy became a rhetorical tool to increase the fighting spirit of the Allies and to decrease that of the Germans.

Just as participation in the war inspired Wilson to advocate American principles in a more extreme fashion, to use those principles as weapons of war and to view those principles as reasons for war, so it led him to compromise those principles where winning the war required it. At the same time as Wilson described this war's purpose as that of "making the world safe for democracy," he refrained from declaring war on Germany's undemocratic allies. Victor S. Mamatey describes the inconsistency of Wilson's position well:

Since the war was to be a crusade for democracy, and since autocratic governments could not be trusted to keep the covenants of peace, it would have been consistent for the President to recommend a declaration of war also on Germany's allies, whose governments were scarcely more democratic than the German government. If the Americans were ready to fight for the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and obedience, it would have been logical for the United States to join in the struggle for the liberation of the Austrian Slavs, Rumanians, and Italians from the Habsburg rule and of the Turkish Armenians, Arabs and Kurds from the Ottoman oppression. However, in defining the attitude of the United States towards Germany's allies he fell back on his original promise of making war only to defend American rights.<sup>11</sup>

In the same speech where Wilson declared a crusade against autocracy, he admitted, "we enter the war only where we are clearly forced into it because there are no other means of defending our rights."

It might have suited Wilson's crusade for democracy to declare war on Austria-Hungary and Turkey but, for the time being, it did not suit his desire to wage war against Germany in the most efficient way possible. There were three reasons for Wilson to refrain from taking the crusade for democracy to Germany's allies: First, he was not well-informed about the aspirations and the conditions of nationalities in East Central Europe. Second, he did not think the American public was ready to make enemies of countries which had done it little immediate harm. Third, and most importantly, he and the Allies continued to hope that they might be able to forge a separate peace with Austria-Hungary, thereby bringing Germany to its knees and bringing the war to a swift conclusion.

Wilson went so far as to hint at the possibility of creating guarantees regarding the political integrity of the Empire in exchange for a separate peace with Austria-Hungary.<sup>12</sup> Ominously, given the apathy with which European and American leaders would view German atrocities toward the Jews prior to World War II, the administration went so far as to pursue cordial relations with the Ottoman Empire even though it was familiar with Turkish atrocities toward the Armenians. Although well aware of the inequities of the Turkish political system, Lansing cabled the Ambassador in Turkey on April 6, 1917, to relate the former Ambassador's suggestion that he remind Turks of the "cordial relations the United States entertains for Turkey, and make strong representations of the advantages to Turkey in maintaining friendly relations with this country, and intimate to him that, owing to the United States entering into the war the chances of an early peace are greatly improved and the likelihood of German successes vastly diminished, and that Turkey should not sever her friendly relations with the United States."<sup>13</sup> As an ally to Germany, Turkey did, however, sever relations on April 20.

Even after Wilson decided that the need to coordinate America's war effort with that of the Allies compelled him to declare war on Germany's allies, he did not at first take the same interest in their internal politics as he did in the

politics of Germany. He refrained from espousing the cause of nationalities desiring independence in Austria-Hungary, and made no distinction between the governments and people of Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, or between the dominant and subject races of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires.<sup>14</sup> Still, the Wilsonian rhetoric of universal democracy, of fair treatment for all nations and peoples and of a new international order could not help but encourage the subject peoples in these areas; and Wilson's principles never allowed him to go so far as to intentionally *discourage* their hopes.

Wilson's stance toward Germany's undemocratic allies, although inconsistent with his emphasized war aim, was not overtly inconsistent with the traditional tenets of American foreign policy. The United States had not traditionally sought to spread democracy *at the expense of* U.S. interests in part because the interests of the greatest democratic nation on earth were viewed as essential to the interests of democracy in general. Given that the preservation of this nation was a primary and legitimate goal of government, it was within American principles to wage war against the "German threat" in the most effective way possible, albeit within the guidelines of civilized and humane conduct. In addition, it was not generally within our principles to spread democracy through war, but rather through example, contact and influence. When that influence had been military as, for example, it had been under Roosevelt's gunboat diplomacy in Latin America, it had generally spawned debate among Americans about whether democracy were being violated or being served. On those two occasions when, it is possible to argue, the United States did go to war for democracy, against Mexico in the 1840s and against Spain in the 1890s, the debate had been fervent and impassioned. Finally, although Americans traditionally exhibited concern over the fate of democracy in Europe, they had stopped short of viewing the internal affairs of European governments as direct foreign policy concerns of our own. Indeed, the United States traditionally recognized established governments—even if they were undemocratic—so long as they were tolerated by their own people.

Thus, the initial failure to declare war on Turkey or Austria-Hungary was not necessarily inconsistent with American principles. What made that policy contradictory was the fact that a "war for democracy" had been declared. What made that policy problematic was that a new way of dealing with "ethnic groups" had reared its ugly head in Turkey. Wilson had declared that we were fighting for "the defense and vindication of the rights of people everywhere to live as they have a right to live under the very principles of our nation."<sup>15</sup> He had implied that the war would not end until autocracy had been undone and indicated that the prospect of a lasting peace required that democracies reject compromises or bargains with our untrustworthy opponents. Against this background, the failure to declare war on Germany's allies, and to show the same concern for their internal politics as he showed for the internal politics of Germany, stands in opposition.

The exigencies of war seem to force the dichotomy of mission and power on



us, for the most efficient use of power often means detaching the use of power from the limitations and obligations which our principles would normally impose on it. At the same time, the most effective use of our principles often means trumpeting and exaggerating them (in other words, using them as wartime rhetoric), causing deviations from them to be all the more glaring.

It was with the entrance of the United States into the war, and with the newly interfering and uncompromising quality of the democratic mission, that Wilson and the United States began to seem hypocritical and inconsistent wherever they did not take a stand for democratic rights. As America expanded its role in the world, it opened the door for raised hopes on the part of subject peoples, and for disillusionment when those hopes were not met. As it assumed new responsibilities in the world, it would increasingly be held "responsible" for the world's problems. Wherever we exerted influence, we could also be blamed. Already, during the early stages of our participation in the war, there were signs that involvement was going to include vitiation.

Wilson appealed to a mobilized public by holding out the promise of wonderful results. This tactic reflected the idea that mission and power were inseparable; we had the most influence where we did the most good. Now, however, our rhetoric seemed to promise more than we could do. Let us look at another manifestation of this phenomenon.

If Wilson's early policies toward Austria-Hungary seemed to contravene the crusade for democracy even as they were consonant with the tenet of gradualism, the tactic of distinguishing between the people and the government of Germany in order to incite the people against their government seemed to violate the tenet of gradualism while being consonant with the crusade for democracy. This was not the first time Wilson violated that tenet. His pursuit of stability and democracy had been overbearing in Haiti, Santo Domingo and Nicaragua. Now, however, Wilson was not only going to the point of "war for democracy"; he was directing that campaign toward the internal politics of Germany, not Latin America, where we had a traditional interest in maintaining stability and warding off European imperialism and encroachment. In effect, he was violating his own declaration that the United States would not incite revolutions.

Wilson justified his aggressive interference in the internal affairs of Germany by drawing a connection between the internal imposition of force and the external imposition of force, and between a country's respect for the principle of consent with regard to its own people and its respect for the principle with regard to foreign people. What tied autocracy and imperialism together was that both ignored the will of the people. One ruled its own people without their consent; the other ruled alien peoples without their consent. Indicating the connection between these two systems, Wilson had said, "No peace can last, or ought to last, which does not recognize that governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that no right anywhere exists to hand peoples about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property."<sup>16</sup>

Wilson drew another connection between internal autocracy and external ag-

gression. Autocratic rulers were more likely to provoke wars than democratic leaders because the will of the people was not there to "check" their own. Such designs on the world as the German government had, he said, could be "successfully worked out only under cover and where no one has the right to ask questions."

These connections between internal and external forms of consent and, conversely, of repression, and between internal autocracy and external imperialism enabled Wilson to move further still from the traditional American opposition to wars for the sake of overhauling the governmental structures of foreign countries. Traditionally, war was legitimate for America where it entailed self-defense or national security. Now, Wilson could argue that changing the internal structures of foreign countries *was* a matter of self-defense, for those autocratic countries which failed to respect the principle of consent in regard to their own people were those *same* countries whose armies exploited other peoples and aggressed against other nations. In effect, they were those which threatened American security. This points to the practical side of the crusade for democracy. The proliferation of democracy was not only desirable; it was now viewed as essential. Wilson's wartime policies and ideas did not signal the mere rejection of former policies or principles for the sake of new ones, but they did signal that our definition of what was necessary and of what befitted American principles had changed.

Wilson submitted that it could no longer be considered opportunism for the United States to tamper with the politics of other nations. In this interconnected world, interfering was a necessity which had the added benefit of enlightening others. In his declaration of war, Wilson had declared, "Neutrality is no longer *feasible nor desirable* where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized force which is controlled fully by their will, not by the will of their people."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the notion that American foreign policy had to include the consideration of what is right while reflecting American practicality remained even as the United States changed its definition of what was practical and what was right.

The distinction between the German government and the German people allowed Wilson to portray the American military campaign as actually promoting unity with the German people, and so to depict a war, which was by its nature divisive, in terms of the creation of an international consensus regarding democratic values.<sup>18</sup> If the German government did not rest upon the consent of the governed, it followed that the German people themselves were not to blame for the war. It also followed that the wartime tactic of alienating the German people from their government had a legitimate foundation in logic. Wilson declared: "We have no quarrel with the German people. We have no feeling toward them but one of sympathy and friendship. It was not upon their impulse that their government acted in entering this war. It was not with their previous knowledge or approval."<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that this distinction between the German people and their government was a tool for defeating Germany and for causing strife between the people and their leaders and *was* divisive. That distinction was considered by Allied and Wilson administration officials alike to be an effective method for undermining the German war effort. It was commonly acknowledged as a *tactic of war*. For example, on August 11, 1917, the American Minister in Switzerland cabled Secretary of State Lansing that in order to stimulate interest in the war, the German press would henceforth exaggerate the war aims of their enemies and exaggerate the disaster which would result from German defeat. He recommended that Wilson counteract this propaganda with propaganda of his own: "Any renewed public utterance of the President emphasizing distinction already made between German autocratic Government and people and showing that German defeat would not entail annihilation of Germany might nullify success of such propaganda."<sup>20</sup> In a letter to Wilson reporting on a conversation with Sir Eric Drummond, Colonel House reported:

I convinced Drummond that the most effective thing we could do at present was to aid the German Liberals in their fight against the present German Government. . . . The idea is for you to say, at a proper time and occasion, that the Allies are ready to treat with the German people, but they are not ready to treat with a military autocracy.<sup>21</sup>

House reiterated to Wilson his belief that waging war on German morale was as important as waging war on the field. He felt that this could best be done by "constant repetition" of the note which Wilson struck in his war speech of April 2—"that the war was waged for the liberation of all peoples and that unless the people dissociated themselves from the regime, their ruin would be linked with that of the Hohenzollerns."<sup>22</sup>

More than any other leader, Wilson realized that, in this war, words were weapons. At a time when traditions were doubted, when all acknowledged the need for new ideas, and when facilities for communication were great, Wilson's words of hope had great appeal. Wilson knew he had the advantage in the war of words. Although his ideas put everyone on the defensive so that, by the time the United States entered the war, Wilsonian-sounding phrases were emanating from the Entente and Central Powers alike, only Wilson was believed when he said that we desired neither conquest nor dominion, neither indemnities nor material compensation. Because the United States had indeed proven itself generally averse to imperialism and conquest, Wilson's words had a credibility which the words of other leaders lacked.

Perhaps more than any other president before or after him, Wilson *used* America's reputation for unselfishness to diffuse American influence. By extolling the virtues of the American democracy while holding out the hope of a better life to those who were not so fortunate as ourselves, Wilson indeed made himself champion of mankind. People all over the world turned to him, placing in him their confidence and trust. America's reputation was part of its power. With that

reputation in hand, Wilson forged an offensive campaign of democratic ideals. His war of words was an attempt to make the German people impatient and intolerant with their leaders and with the war and to show them a better alternative.

His approach toward the Germans was reminiscent of the U.S. approach toward the Philippines in the 1890s in its didacticism and paternalism. At the same time, there is a premonition of the Cold War in Wilsonian tactics. The idea that the domestic political structure, in this case the German autocracy, is implicated when there is external aggression would recur in the 1940s. Unlike Truman's containment plan for preventing aggression, however, Wilson's internationalist plan did not allow for the coexistence of alien political structures. Autocracy, imperialism and communism were anathema to traditional American ideals and to Wilsonian internationalism.

There were two prerequisites to a Wilsonian world. The first was that the United States had to take the lead in creating the new world order. Through assuming the moral leadership in this war, and, after the war, through supporting the Open Door, developing the underdeveloped areas of the world and joining the League of Nations, the United States would create economic and political interdependence while spreading its liberal values. The second prerequisite was the liberal values themselves, for without democracy and capitalism there could be no "free" trade, no concert of "free" nations and no "open" door. Thus, just as the domestic situation in Germany increasingly became a reason for this war, so a change in the domestic situation increasingly became a criterion for peace.

Similarly, the main criterion for entry into the League of Nations came to be that of democratic government. Wilson declared that our "object" was: "to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the world as against selfish and autocratic power and to set up *amongst the really free and self-governed peoples of the world* such a concert of purpose and of action as will henceforth insure the observance of those principles." He insisted: "A steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations." No autocratic government "could be trusted to keep faith with it or observe its covenants."<sup>23</sup>

In light of the themes of mission and power, this is very interesting. Clearly, this kind of internationalism promised to make American institutions and power secure. Wilson did not envision the mere containment of alien political structures, but the spread of capitalism and democracy to virtually every part of the globe.

In view of this, Wilson's internationalism seems almost synonymous with nationalism. Indeed, various writers have seen Wilson's internationalism as a projected form of nationalism. This is only partly true, for internationalism was conceived by Wilson as an *antidote* to nationalism. Wilson viewed nationalism as that myopic approach to world politics which sees only the immediate advantage to one's own and ignores the long-term consequences of any given action for all concerned; it was a key reason for the advent of this awful war.

More than specific policies, Wilson believed, an entire frame of mind was at fault. Wilson's insistence on the importance of internal democracies and an external community of nations was an attempt to put reason in control; to put rational ideas and structures in place of the irrational events and structures nationalism seemed to promote.

Wilson's wartime pronouncements and actions cannot be understood without adequate attention to his *postwar* plan. Wilson wanted to create a community of interests and ideas which would force leaders of nations to think of the consequences of their actions before they acted. Through the League of Nations, nations would pledge to unite against the transgressions of any other nation. Through the League, there was to be time for careful judgment. Once a transgression was committed, the involved nations would be called upon to await the decision of the League Council. In place of geopolitical maneuvers and imperialistic territory-grabbing there was to be responsibility and accountability in international life. As Harley Notter notes, Wilson believed in man as a distinct moral agent. He believed individual responsibility before God to be "the foundation of liberty in the modern world."<sup>24</sup> By making all nations accountable to international law, the League of Nations was to engender that same responsibility in nations as existed in individuals who were accountable to domestic laws and religious morality. Wilson said, "We are at the beginning of an age in which it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct and responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among nations and their governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states."<sup>25</sup>

The League was to be a voluntary association of nations which, in turn, respected the volition of their own people. An international system which rested upon freedom was thought by Wilson to have the greatest chance for being a system of peace and justice, free men and nations being the most pacific and moderate. Paying ever more attention to the political and ideological form of other nations, Wilson began to refer to militarism as a "system": Militarism was a system which created antagonism and suspicion between citizens and between states. An important guarantee to the security of *all* nations was to be the proliferation of the spirit of freedom by which nations might come to respect the right of others to live in freedom. That spirit had to predominate over the spirit of militarism:

Militarism does not consist in the existence of a very great army. Militarism is a spirit. It is a point of view. It is a system. It is a purpose. The purpose of militarism is the opposite of the civilian spirit, the citizen spirit. In a country where militarism prevails the military man looks down upon the civilian, regards him as inferior, and just so long as America is America that spirit and point of view is impossible with us.<sup>26</sup>

Enlightened and free opinion was to replace what Wilson believed to be the irrational structures of world politics which ignored individual sentiment and thought, allowing a country's actions to be dictated by a foreordained plan, such

as a military alliance, rather than by a measured assessment of the logical and just. World War I had been caused by just such foreordained plans. Alliances, Wilson believed, were only temporary lapses from war. The League, he believed, would be a more permanent and, hence, a more expedient solution to Europe's problems: "We are seeking permanent, not temporary, foundations for the peace of the world and must seek them candidly and fearlessly. As always, the right will prove to be the expedient."<sup>27</sup>

The proliferation of democracy was to return sanity and individual sentiments and, hence, limits and moral scruples to international life. Wilsonian internationalism, although new, rejected certain aspects of modernity. It rejected large impersonal conflagrations, rampant military technology, a "systems" approach to politics and nationalism, which had no bounds in the personal and moral.<sup>28</sup> Thus, again, it is important not to exaggerate the extent to which Wilsonian internationalism was a projection of American nationalism, for it was Wilson who prodded Americans to care about the world and admonished them against selfishness. And it was he who tried to unite the "opinion" of the world behind values which he considered universal, and to mobilize that opinion so that it would affect the future course of world politics. The peace would be made secure by the "organized force of mankind."

It is by now apparent that the nationalistic and the internationalist elements of Wilson's wartime policies, while clearly important, should not be exaggerated. This point is reinforced if we recall the extent to which the United States became part of the European alliance system during the war. An alliance is not internationalist, for it involves the siding of one group against another. In the case of the United States, neither was it nationalistic for, in order to participate in an alliance, the United States had to overcome the *national* wariness of alliances and to compromise regarding certain national principles which discouraged many of the ideas and methods which had to be accepted for the sake of the war.

In the case of the Europeans, alliances were viewed as essential to the nation; they were within the parameters of the nation's traditions. In the case of the United States, participation in a European alliance was a *new* experience which represented a deviation from our nation's past. One of the ironies of the war was that just as Wilson prodded hesitant Americans toward participation in a world order based on equal rights for all nations and a community among them, he led Americans to participate in the *divisions* of the world as they had never participated in them before. Just as he raised the specter of an American-inspired world order, he led Americans to accommodate themselves to certain European ideas and methods.

The effect that it had on the United States' definition of itself to become enemy and ally in a world war cannot be overestimated. While Wilson denounced the balance of power, there was no denying that we had sided with one side of the "balance." While Wilson evinced world harmony as the ultimate goal of the war, he believed that he had to pave the way for a harmonious world

by first destroying what he perceived to be the biggest deterrent to its realization: the autocratic German state. With this immediate goal in mind, he was frequently willing to postpone the application of his universal principles to a later date. While the war was on, he would depict Germany as the source of evil and do everything he could to discredit and defeat it. So too, while the war was on, he would ignore certain Allied transgressions of principle and forego attempts to tie them to his internationalist goals. Although he never ignored the chance to espouse his internationalist principles, he was limited by what he believed to be necessities of war.

Even after the Russian Bolsheviks published the "Secret Treaties," which revealed the imperialistic war aims of the Allies, Wilson chose to ignore them. He hoped that the Allies would be so dependent upon American financial support after the war that they would have no choice but to succumb to pressure and to modify their imperialistic goals. In a letter to House on July 21, 1917, Wilson expostulated, "When the war is over we can force them to our way of thinking, because by that time they will, among other things, be financially in our hands; but we cannot force them now and any attempt to speak for them or to speak our common mind would bring on disagreements which would inevitably come to the surface in public and rob the whole thing of its effect."<sup>29</sup> When, on July 20, 1917, Ambassador Jusserand from France requested information regarding a Society of Nations saying that Ribot would soon convene a commission charged with examining the questions, Wilson responded that such a commission was "premature" and would "introduce new subjects of discussion and perhaps of difference of view among the nations associated against Germany."<sup>30</sup> Thus, we were in league with partners whose views were frequently contrary to our own; our fate so tied to theirs that Wilson felt we could not afford to alienate them.

This intermingling of internationalism and alliance-building is especially intriguing if one looks at the relation of these approaches to prior ones. Both involved radical departures from the norm, which strained our original ideals. Internationalism provided the true test of whether we could become involved in European politics, albeit for our own ends, without compromising ourselves. Our attempts at alliance-building provided the answer. If we were going to become involved in Europe, we were going to have to compromise with Europeans. The Achilles' heel of internationalism is that unity poses a problem for morality. Wilson believed that morality depends upon individual freedom, upon the personal ability to choose right over wrong. Unity entails modification of the individual will for the sake of the whole, and hence a diminution of "moral perfection."

Let us look more closely, then, at a point which in most works is overshadowed by the emphasis on Wilson's internationalism: At the same time that Wilson criticized the balance-of-power approach to politics, his policies *approximated* that approach more closely than the policies of any president before him. I emphasize the word "approximate" because, while the traditional balance

of power rested upon an equilibrium between states, Wilson sought to replace the reliance upon equilibrium with a singular international order which would eventually include all states. Another key aspect of the balance of power, however, was the alignment of certain states against others and their exertion of united force against those who threatened to undo the equilibrium by grabbing too much power for themselves. It was the European emphasis on alignment, not the emphasis on equilibrium, which Wilson adopted. This is evident in his acquiescent stance toward the Allies and his uncompromising stance toward the Germans. We shall now see that it is further evident in Wilson's response to German political reforms and to the pope's Peace Proposal, and in the structure and purpose of the League of Nations, which he advocated.

By the summer of 1917, there were signs of reform in Germany and signs that Germany might accept a reasonable peace. On July 6, the American minister in Denmark, Maurice Francis Egan, cabled Lansing:

I recently had a conversation with the Chancellor and I am in a position to state that he would be willing to conclude peace towards East and West today without any annexations or compensations. In the past the Chancellor has never asserted this with such distinction to the public. He has considered it more appropriate to keep quiet. This is not owing to lack of earnestness but to the nature of his position.<sup>31</sup>

Soon afterward, Kaiser Wilhelm issued an edict reforming Prussian election laws, although Egan cabled, "Not a word is spoken regarding the political formation of the Empire, the participation of the people's representatives in the Government and their responsibility thereto."<sup>32</sup> In the fall, Michaelis succeeded Bethmann-Hollweg as Chancellor, and refused to accept control of the Reichstag, indicating his belief in democratic reform. By this time, social unrest in Germany was manifesting itself in pressures for political reform and for a compromise peace. On October 22, Egan wired: "Crisis in Germany is acute. If our country would make it clear that it will treat for peace if the Reichstag is a power, the effect in Germany would be good."<sup>33</sup>

As tenuous as these reforms might have been, given the continued strength of the military class in Germany, Wilson's apathetic response to them is significant. Although reforms had taken place *within* the German government, and although the Social Democrats were increasingly influential in that government, Wilson continued to depict the German government as irredeemably militaristic and autocratic. He neither acknowledged nor supported German reforms but chose to ignore them. This unwillingness to countenance German reforms and reformists points to the fact that Wilson wanted more than reform; he wanted the *destruction* of the current German state. This, in turn, points to the unprecedented extent to which the United States was aligned with one group of states *against* another. Even if we view Wilson's policies as a crusade of democracy against autocracy, that does not change the fact that this crusade entailed the staunch opposition of forces. The fact was that it existed, that we were part of



it and that we would settle for nothing less than the destruction of that which we opposed.

The extent to which we were enthralled in the power-political divisions of Europe was again evident in Wilson's reply to the pope's Peace Proposal of August. Wilson rejected the pope's suggestion for peace based on the status quo ante bellum and insisted instead that the external as well as the internal structure and basis of German power had to be destroyed:

His Holiness in substance proposes that we return to the status quo ante bellum, and that then there be a general condonation, disarmament, and a concert of nations based upon an acceptance of the principle of arbitration; that by a similar concert freedom of the seas be established, and that the territorial claims of France and Italy, the perplexing problems of the Balkan states, and the restitution of Poland be left to such conciliatory adjustments as may be possible in the new temper of such a peace, due regard being paid to the aspirations of the peoples whose political fortunes and affiliations will be involved. . . . It is manifest that no part of this programme can be successfully carried out unless the restitution of the status quo ante furnishes a firm and satisfactory basis for it. The object of this war is to deliver the free peoples of the world from the menace and the actual power of a vast military establishment controlled by an irresponsible government which, having secretly planned to dominate the world, proceeded to carry the plan out without regard either to the sacred obligations of treaty or the long-established practices and long-cherished principles of international action and honor.

The American people believe, he said:

that peace should rest upon the rights of peoples, not the rights of governments—the rights of peoples great or small, weak or powerful—the equal right to freedom and security and self-government and to a participation upon fair terms in the economic opportunities of the world—the German people included, if they will accept equality and not seek domination.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, Wilson indicated that peace would depend upon the dismantling of the German Empire as well as the dismantling of the current German state. He went so far as to hint that no peace, no matter how moderate, would be acceptable if it were devised by the current "German Government":

We cannot take the word of the present rulers of Germany as a guarantee of anything that is to endure, unless explicitly supported by such conclusive evidences of the will and purpose of the German people themselves as the other peoples of the world would be justified in accepting. Without such guarantees, treaties of settlement, agreements for disarmament, covenants to set up arbitration in the place of force, territorial adjustments, reconstitutions of small nations, if made with the German Government, no man, no nation could now depend on. We must await some new evidence of the purposes of the great peoples of the Central Empires. God grant that it may be given soon and in a way to restore the confidence of all peoples everywhere in the faith of nations and the possibility of a covenanted peace.<sup>35</sup>

Wilson's rejection of peace based on the status quo ante bellum was understandable given his perception that the unstable prewar geopolitical configuration had been partly responsible for the war. With Germany in absolute control of Austria-Hungary, partial control of the Balkan states, control of Turkey and control of Asia-Minor, the time was obviously not opportune for the Allies to make peace. His insistence that the German autocracy be dismantled and that German imperialism be reformed was understandable given his perception that autocratic and imperialistic political philosophies led to war. Soon, Wilson would receive proof that the pope's note had been discussed with German authorities beforehand and, hence, bore the stigma of bias.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the thoroughness with which Wilson discredited the German government and rejected its proposal for a compromise peace is significant, especially if we recall that Wilson was silent regarding the Secret Treaties of the Allies and that, at the Peace Conference, he retained his position regarding the German colonies and the German polity while, in effect, acquiescing to certain provisions in the treaty which allowed the Allies to acquire new colonies (below). Indeed, in his reply to the pope's note, Wilson expressed reservations which were of particular concern to the Allies: that it made no distinction regarding war guilt, and that it did not provide for material compensation to the Allies for damages.

Egan reported that Wilson's position provided justification for the "reactionary organs" in Germany and opened the reform-minded Social Democrats to the charge of a lack of patriotism. For example, the *Tageszeitung* attacked the Social Democrats "on the ground that they are going arm in arm with Wilson for no other purpose than to shake the foundations of the German Empire," and that "whatever the outcome of the President's note may be as affecting German internal politics, the immediate result is seen in the endeavor of the Right to weaken the Social Democrats by a charge of non-patriotism."<sup>37</sup> Indeed, many Social Democrats began to condemn Wilsonian war goals, branding them as a new form of extremism. They especially resented his unwillingness to acknowledge the reforms which they had worked so hard to achieve. Many began to doubt whether Wilson sincerely wanted peace. The Chargé in the Netherlands cabled:

The Kolnische Zeitung quotes Socialist papers condemning President's note. In appeal for subscriptions seventh war loan Berlin eldest merchants' association it is doubly patriotic duty every German to subscribe at moment when United States President in complete ignorance German conditions and venting hostility to German Empire illy concealed before this undertakes again dastardly attempt to sow discord between German Government and people.<sup>38</sup>

The minister in Switzerland reported on "energetic protests against President Wilson's reply to the Pope on the part of commerce, industrial associations and commercial clubs in Stuttgart."

These setbacks for Wilson were ultimately outweighed by his successes in

alienating the German people from the government; for by diminishing the chances of a quick peace, his note seems to have increased the impatience and restlessness of the German people. Moreover, his constant harping on the necessity for democratization did raise hopes of reform. In September, Chargé Wilson reported that pressures on the German government were so great that Emperor Charles was considering abdication:

The President's reply to the peace note of the Pope has had great effect on the better as well as in the lower German circles where the true text is known. Great unrest among the working classes is causing the German Government very great anxiety and naval and military officials have been instructed to be prepared to cope with any threatening demonstration. At a very recent meeting called by the Kaiser at which Hindenburg and the leaders among the naval and Government officers were present the German Emperor informed his guests that if it was the desire of the Army, Navy, and the people of Germany that he abdicate he would do so. All present pledged their loyalty, offered their general support of his dynasty.<sup>39</sup>

For a president who advocated gradualism and a country which supported moderation in its foreign policy, the insistence that the long-established German Empire and government simply be dismantled and replaced and the *lack* of such extreme demands on the Allies were extraordinary. They were evidence of a newfound partisanship which seemed to interpose both the internationalist and the provincial elements in American politics. In this sense, there are parallels between Wilson's wartime tactics and Truman's Cold War tactics, parallels reflected in their mutual attempts to prevent and curtail the "enemy's" aggression by uniting with other nations.

The literature has so focused on Wilson's internationalism that it has neglected the fact that the prospective League of Nations, which Wilson advocated wholeheartedly during our participation in the war, in certain ways resembled a defensive alliance. Although the naivete of the League of Nations is often cited, its very practical purpose is often overlooked. The purpose of the League was to prevent aggression through the threat of political, economic and military force. Because all nations were eventually to be accepted into the League once they proved their allegiance to democratic principles, it is tempting and indeed correct to view the League in contradistinction to the post-World War II alliance structure. It did not entail the balancing of one group of powers against another, nor was it directed against any particular *alignment* of states. The prospective League did not have a definitive list of states which were "in" and which were "out" but, rather, had flexibility in that whichever states respected the principles of international behavior were to align against whichever states did not. These qualifications, however, do not detract from the fact that the League was to be an association to preclude the ability of a potential enemy to cause another war. This is so even if that enemy were potential rather than actual, indefinite rather than specific.

We must remember that Wilson did not think it possible to predict with certainty who the future aggressor might be. In addition, he believed that the creation of particular alignments had only served to antagonize particular states against others. Although the League was eventually to admit all nations, it included the possibility of all peaceful nations uniting against an aggressor state. In this sense, it included the possibility of an alignment, not of certain states against certain others, but of non-aggressors against aggressors. On February 11, 1918, Wilson delivered a speech responding to recent proposals for peace in the speeches of Count Czernin of Austria and Count von Hertling of Germany. In it, he lambasted the idea of peace through "barter and concession" between *particular* states. Count von Hertling, Wilson said:

will discuss with no one but the representatives of Russia what disposition shall be made of the peoples and the lands of the Baltic provinces; with no one but the Government of France the "conditions" under which French territory shall be evacuated; and only with Austria what should be done with Poland. In the determination of all questions affecting the Balkan states, he defers, as I understand him, to Austria and Turkey; and regard to the agreement to be entered into concerning the non-Turkish peoples of the present Ottoman Empire, to the Turkish authorities themselves. . . . The method the German Chancellor proposes is the method of the Congress of Vienna. We cannot and will not return to that. What is at stake now is the peace of the world. What we are striving for is a new international order based upon broad and universal principles of right and justice—no mere peace of shreds and patches.<sup>40</sup>

It may have been naive to think that states would stand by the League if their interests lay with the interests of the aggressor, but that is why Wilson tried to change Europe's definition of its "interest." He used the virtues of the American democracy and the horrors of this war to demonstrate the advantages of taking the long view, and putting long-term, peaceful goals in front of immediate, selfish ones. It should also be noted that, in spite of the unspecific character of the League, Wilson conspicuously did not argue at the Peace Conference for Germany's early admission to it.

It is by now evident that the earlier emphasis on Wilson's optimism regarding the proliferation of democracy, rationality and accountability in international life must be qualified, for, that optimism was mitigated by a degree of skepticism regarding the behavior of powerful states. Wilson may have hoped for too much but he did not exhibit a lack of concern for acquiring countermeasures to a prospective enemy. That optimism was further mitigated by Wilson's view of modernity. As Frank Ninkovich argues, he saw the new interconnectedness of the world as having both the potential for good and the potential for calamity: Wilson "recognized one of modernity's most prominent and paradoxical features; as the world became more industrialized and integrated, it became more orderly and predictable; at the same time, breakdowns of the system, though perhaps less frequent, were more calamitous."<sup>41</sup>

Having acknowledged that Wilson's optimism was qualified, it is useful to examine the ways in which Wilson *did*, nevertheless, hope for too much. The League of Nations idea rested upon the supposition that non-aggressors would unite against an aggressor. This supposition was probably naive. If Country A would be more secure if Country B's power were increased and Country D's decreased, could Country A be counted on to punish B for attacking D? Wilson was right in seeing that each nation's definition of its interests would have to change in order for such a system to work; most nations would have to learn to value peace and world harmony more than they valued an increase in their own power. But Wilson overestimated the extent to which and the speed with which nations and peoples could be taught to adopt new ideas and reject old ones.

Wilson also overestimated the extent to which the balance of power could be rendered obsolete by new methods and ideas regarding the world's security; unless the world were *truly* to become united, the relative balance of power between states remained crucial. Wilson overestimated the extent to which the world would think and act in unison if only it were exposed to democratic ideas and imbued with democratic political structures. Indeed, those very democratic ideas as Wilson interpreted them contributed as much to disunity as they did to unity in the postwar period. The principles of self-determination, political freedom and independence which Wilson would soon emphasize would contribute to the proliferation of new states, the disintegration of old ones and, consequently, to the intense rivalry between nations for money, natural resources and land. And, if the world were not going to be united, it mattered what pattern its disunity formed.

In order to achieve stability, states needed specific preparations for defense against those particular states which were likely to aggress against them. In other words, even though Europe needed to reassess its balance-of-power strategy and to infuse that strategy with new ideas, the balance of power still mattered. Hajo Holborn explains:

As early as January 1917, Wilson had proclaimed that there should be no "new balance of power" but instead a "community of power." His concept of a League of Nations, however, though it envisaged the ultimate use of force against an aggressor, rested chiefly on the belief that a united world opinion would act as a deterrent to aggression and that, if this failed, an aggressor could probably be brought to heel by economic boycott and blockade. Collective military action was to be taken, if at all, only after considerable damage had been done. Yet defense against invasion was still a vital problem that the individual states alone or in groups would have to meet. Although Wilson was right when he judged that the balance of power had failed to provide a secure foundation for world peace, the different nations, including the United States and Britain, were far from ready to pull their whole strength in a singular "community of power," and the relative balance of power between states remained a matter of vital significance.<sup>42</sup>

Interestingly, even though the Wilson administration viewed the proliferation of democracy as an eventual antidote to the balance of power, the administration

was exposed to the view that the proliferation of democracy was to be valued not just because it would make international relations more moderate and pacific but also because democratic states would provide a barrier against German aggression. Even before the Cold War, some were beginning to view democracy itself in geopolitical terms. One rationale given for the final decision to support dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (below) was the desire to see Germany "surrounded" by democratic states. This idea cannot help but remind one of the post-World War II policy of "containing" Russia by creating a barrier of democratic states in Western Europe. On September 14, 1917, Special Agent H. Percival Dodge in Corfu related to the State Department the ideas of Mr. Pashitch, President of the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, regarding the favorable strategic situation which would result if Austria-Hungary were dismembered:

The Yugoslav peoples would then undoubtedly unite themselves to Serbia. Galacia would join Poland, the Czechs and Slovaks would form an independent state as would also Hungary, deprived however of its Rumanian populations which would unite with Rumania. This could only leave the German provinces of Upper and Lower Austria, the original possessions of the House of Habsburg, which would remain an independent state or enter the German Empire. This accretion of strength to the German Empire would be almost exactly compensated by the loss to France of Alsace-Lorraine, to Denmark of Schleswig-Holstein and to Poland of the Polish provinces of Prussia. Germany would thus be completely surrounded by a barrier of democratic commonwealths which would have very reason for allying themselves together politically and economically against her until she also was forced to adopt a truly democratic and responsible government.<sup>43</sup>

The administration would hear similar arguments from the French.

Lansing himself submitted a memorandum to Wilson indicating that "independence" for the nationalities was the "only certain means of ending German power in Europe."<sup>44</sup> Even though Wilson's acceptance of such ideas was indirect in that he never stated geopolitical reasons for the creation of democratic states, the intriguing fact is that his policies to some extent coalesced with such ideas. Even if Wilson did not advocate the proliferation of democracy as a geopolitical tactic, that policy came to have anti-German significance. He valued the proliferation of democracy not just for democracy's inherent value but also for democracy's connection with peace and a secure world. Even though his goals were internationalist, there was no mistaking the fact that the United States had become enemy and ally in a world war. This was so in spite of the fact that Wilson refused to call the United States an "ally," preferring instead the term "associate." It was so in spite of the fact that we were to join a League of Nations only in order to render traditional alliances unnecessary.

## **RUSSIA**

Although Wilson was reticent in regard to Allied war aims and reluctant to criticize the Allies directly, his wartime rhetoric was designed to influence the

Entente and Russia as well as the Central Powers.<sup>45</sup> Although Germany was the explicitly mentioned culprit in this war, the underlying enemy was extremism itself. We have seen that Wilson's words were designed to make moderate-democratic forms of government attractive to the Germans. In addition, however, Wilson hoped that his rhetoric would pressure the Allies into modifying their war aims and accepting radically new solutions to the problem of security. But Wilson's rhetoric was not directed toward the "right" alone. It was also designed to assuage the purposes of the left; for during the first year of American participation in the war, the Russian Revolution, which had originally been viewed by the administration as a vast improvement over the autocratic rule of the Czar, turned radical.

On November 7, 1917, Lenin proclaimed that the provisional government had been overthrown. On November 11, news reached Washington that the All-Russian Congress of Soviets had adopted a resolution calling upon all belligerents to commence negotiations for an immediate peace without annexations, forcible conquests and indemnities. They stipulated that all negotiations were to be open to the public and announced that the "Secret Treaties" of the former Russian government were to be published and declared null and void. A three-month armistice was to be sought immediately. On November 29, Ambassador David Francis telegraphed Trotsky's announcement that military operations on the Russian Front had been brought to a standstill and that preliminary negotiations for peace would begin on December 24.

At about this time, House arrived in Europe on yet another diplomatic mission. He made an abortive effort to persuade the Allies to issue a joint statement of moderate and just war aims in order to weaken German propaganda and help the Allies to maintain friendly relations with Russia.<sup>46</sup> It was hoped that if Allied war aims appeared more liberal, the war effort and the Allies themselves would appear more attractive to the Russians. With the Allies refusing to endorse even a mild resolution declaring that they weren't waging the war for territorial aggrandizement and indemnities, House felt that the "next best thing" was for Wilson to make a statement revealing the equitability of American war aims.<sup>47</sup>

Wilson and House decided that a comprehensive address might prove to be the "moral turning point" of the war. Wilson asked House and the "Inquiry," his appointed investigative commission which included Walter Lippman, to collect and arrange materials for the address, informing them that he would frame the speech with three purposes in mind: (1) to provide an answer to the Bolshevik demand for an explanation of the objects of the war; (2) to appeal to German socialists, and (3) to notify the Entente that there must be a revision in a liberal sense of war aims. In addition, this speech was designed to convince the Russians to stay in the war and to prevent them from making peace with Germany; for although they had signed an armistice agreement with Germany, "it was not yet plain that they could agree on terms of peace."<sup>48</sup> Lenin and Trotsky had disagreed, Lenin wanting peace on any terms, Trotsky wanting "no peace, no war." Wilson hoped to alienate the Russians from the Germans by

expressing sympathy for their cause, by promising them substantial help and by demonstrating our own liberality.

The purposes he gave for his speech reveal the extent to which Wilson conceived the American identity and mission in terms of the maintenance of a moderate middle ground which would hold *all* forms of extremism at bay. He hoped to deradicalize the Bolsheviks, to encourage moderate German social reform and to assuage the purposes of the Entente. As N. Gordon Levin Jr. has suggested, Wilson hoped to pose a liberal-democratic alternative to both the left and the right.<sup>49</sup> He hoped that his brand of liberalism would appeal to leftists as an alternative to *their kind* of anti-communism, and to rightists as a viable alternative to *their kind* of anti-communism. Hoping that all sides would recognize the dangers of dividing the world anew into opposing political camps, Wilson appealed to everyone's sense of sanity and justice.

The Fourteen Points Address of January 8, 1918 is most remarkable not for the novelty of its ideas, but for the extent to which it maintained the compatibility of Wilson's new solutions to the world's problems with moderation and a healthy respect for the past. In face of the extreme Bolshevik answer to the dismaying abundance of imperialism and oppression, Wilson pointed to the American experiment as evidence that not all powers had used the technological and military tools of the twentieth century to dominate and destroy. There was an alternative to modernity; to the avidity and capaciousness of states and to the radical reactions against them. That alternative lay in the demonstration that the universal principle underlying the "American experiment" could indeed be applied universally. The Address modernized American principles and used them as solutions to modern problems.

The first four demands for "open covenants of peace openly arrived at," "absolute freedom of navigation" on the seas, the "establishment of an equality of trade among nations," and "reductions of armaments" reflected the traditional American belief in equal rights between nations and in non-militaristic societies. The fifth principle, like the first four, indicated that solutions to modern problems could be found in moderate American principles. In place of the radical communist solution to imperialism, Wilson's solution suggested gradualism. He did not demand that colonialism be abolished but he did insist that the right principles had to influence and mitigate the colonial phenomenon: He demanded "a free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined." In his sixth point, Wilson hinted that if the Allies adopted the right principles in their relations with Russia, Russia could "progress"; progress, for Russia, need not mean abandonment of the Allied cause. Wilson demanded:

The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest cooperation of the nations of the world in



obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.<sup>50</sup>

Points seven through nine dealt with Allied war aims: the evacuation and restoration of Belgium, the dispensation of Alsace-Lorraine to France and a readjustment of the frontiers of Italy. The latter two had less to do with Wilsonian principles than with the simple fact that Italy and France would never agree to make peace without the achievement of these goals.

The tenth through fourteenth points again revealed Wilson's belief in the universal applicability of American principles while also revealing his attempt to create from those principles a viable middle ground between the left and the right. In point ten, Wilson advocated the "freest opportunity of autonomous development" for the peoples of Austria-Hungary, but did not go so far as to advocate independence for those peoples or the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Although the reserved nature of his approach to the Austro-Hungarian nationalities had much to do with the necessities of war (above), it fit in with the American tradition of gradualism and of tolerating foreign governments so long as they were tolerated by their own people.

On the other hand, caring about the fate of peoples in foreign countries was an increasingly active premise of American foreign policy. Reinforcing this new "caring," Wilson went on in his next points to ask for guarantees of the political and economic independence of the Baltic states, "autonomous" development for the nationalities of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of an independent Polish state. His final point hinted that these principles provided an alternative to the Bolshevik form of anti-imperialism:

A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small nations alike. . . . In regard to these essential rectifications of wrong and assertions of right we feel ourselves to be intimate partners of all the governments and peoples associated together against the Imperialists. We cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose. We stand together until the end.<sup>51</sup>

Reminding his audience of the dependence of these "points" upon (universal) American principles, Wilson concluded:

An evident principle runs through the whole program I have outlined. It is the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities, and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak. Unless this principle be made its foundation no part of the structure of international justice can stand. The people

of the United States could act upon no other principle and to the vindication of this principle they are ready to devote their lives and everything that they possess.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, there were certain parallels between Wilson's stance toward Germany and his stance toward Russia; Wilsonian internationalism was a moderate-democratic alternative to both extremes. And yet, the parallels should not be exaggerated, nor should they lead us to ignore the dramatic differences between Wilson's analysis of autocracy and imperialism and his analysis of bolshevism. Wilson viewed the defeat of autocracy and imperialism as a primary and essential means for defeating bolshevism, but he did not view the defeat of bolshevism as a primary and essential means for defeating Germany. While he viewed bolshevism as primarily a *reaction* to the inequities and injustices of autocratic and imperialistic systems, he viewed autocracy and imperialism as entrenched and habitual patterns.

Later, Dr. Isaiah Bowman would report, in a memorandum based on a conversation with Wilson, that Wilson believed "the poison of Bolshevism was accepted readily by the world because it was a protest against the way in which the world has worked."<sup>53</sup> Conversely, Wilson always spoke of autocracy and imperialism as the root of the problems in Europe, not as the symptoms. Although bolshevism might provide a new excuse for the extremism of the right, in Wilson's time, it was rarely, if ever, seen as the direct cause. Bolshevism was a new phenomenon while militarism and repressive political systems were old.

This points to another difference between Wilson's attitude toward Germany and toward Russia. For Wilson, Germany was the official enemy and all of his actions revealed the fact that the United States and Germany were belligerents at war. The Russian Bolsheviks, however, were not a known quantity, and it was too soon to determine just what their relationship to the democracies would be. Too many writers have imposed today's views of Russian communism on Wilson's time. Wilson refused until the end to treat Russia as an enemy. While he sought the *destruction* of the German autocracy, his solution to radicalism in Russia aimed less at the phenomenon than at the cause. Working to create a fairer world while demonstrating the virtuousness of our own intentions was viewed by Wilson as the best means of changing Russian politics. There was an essential destructiveness and even an extremism in Wilson's approach toward Germany (even though that extremism was used to defeat "extremism") which was completely absent in his approach toward Russia.

The manifestations of this attenuated approach toward bolshevism were many. The Fourteen Points Address failed to appeal to the Bolsheviks and to prevent them from signing a peace agreement with Germany at Brest-Litovsk. This created a new problem for the Allied war effort in that it would free German armies from the Eastern Front and allow them to concentrate all their resources in the West. It must be remembered that this and not anti-bolshevism was the initial, if not the only, rationale for the "Siberian Expedition." By the imposition of

Japanese and American troops in Siberia, the Allies hoped to reopen the Eastern Front. Another reason was the fear, as Sir William Wiseman said to Colonel House, that the Germans would "organize Russia politically and economically for their advantage." This would give them "undisputed access to grain, oil, and fat supplies in Siberia and valuable metals in the Urals" and enable them to "sustain Austrian morale by telling them that the war is over in the East and that they have only to help in the West to secure a complete German victory."<sup>54</sup> A main reason the British War Cabinet gave in supporting the expedition was the need to protect military stores at Vladivostok and to prevent them from being seized by the Bolsheviks and sent to Germany.<sup>55</sup>

It must be remembered that there were hopes that an agreement might be forged whereby Trotsky would *invite* the Allies into Siberia so that they might prevent that area from falling under German domination. Indeed, Trotsky had hinted at the possibility of an invitation, a move which was strongly denounced by Lenin.<sup>56</sup> On March 5, Ambassador Francis reported that Trotsky had inquired what "moral and material assistance Allies could render if Peace [was] not ratified at Moscow conference March 12."<sup>57</sup> It must also be remembered that Wilson viewed the Russian Bolsheviks as dupes to German aggression and initially considered the possibility that the expedition might serve to protect them.

Finally, it is essential for understanding the difference between Wilson's approach toward the German autocracy and his approach toward Russian bolshevism to remember that it was the English and especially the French who pressed the demand for intervention. Wilson initially hesitated to support the expedition, at first refusing to commit any American troops to the endeavor. On March 5, Wilson handed State Department Counselor Frank Polk a memorandum on Japanese intervention to be sent to Allied ambassadors. The memorandum reveals that German influence in Russia was a dominant concern, that Wilson refused to make an enemy out of the Russians themselves, and that he doubted the wisdom of the expedition as a whole. In addition, it reveals Wilson's fear that aggressive behavior on the part of the Allies would merely provide further excuses for the extremism of the Soviets. (Later, at a Council of Ten Meeting, Wilson would argue that opposing bolshevism with arms only served its cause, with Bolshevik leaders deriving part of their strength from foreign intervention. Wilson would insist that the Allies themselves were fueling Bolshevik contentions that imperialists and capitalists were attempting to exploit their country and to bring about a reaction.)<sup>58</sup> Under pressure, Wilson withdrew his note objecting to an Allied request for Japanese intervention in Russia, but he still refused to join in the request. The March 1918 note is revealing. The United States, it said:

is bound in frankness to say that the wisdom of the invasion seems to it most questionable. If it were undertaken the Government of the United States assumes that the most explicit assurances would be given that it was undertaken by Japan as an ally of Russia in Russia's interest and with the sole view of holding it safe against Germany and at the

absolute disposal of the final peace conference. Otherwise the Central Powers could and would make it appear that Japan was doing in the East exactly what Germany is doing in the West. . . . And it is the judgment of the Government of the United States uttered with the utmost respect that even with such assurances given they could in the same way be discredited by those whose interest it was to discredit them; for hot resentment would be general in Russia, and that the whole action might play into the hands of the enemies of Russia and particularly of the enemies of the Russian revolution for which the Government of the United States entertains the greatest sympathy in spite of all the unhappiness and misfortunes which have for the time being sprung out of it.<sup>59</sup>

Importantly, on March 11, Wilson sent a message to the Soviet Congress reiterating his sympathy for the Russian people and attempting to create a bond between them and Americans on the basis of mutual opposition to autocracy, with the German autocracy being the clear focus of Wilson's attention:

May I not take advantage of the meeting of the Congress of the Soviets to express the sincere sympathy which the people of the United States feel for the Russian people at this moment when the German power has been thrust in to interrupt and turn back the whole struggle for freedom and substitute the wishes of Germany for the purpose of the people of Russia. . . . Although the Government of the United States is, unhappily, not now in a position to render the direct and effective aid it would wish to render, I beg to assure the people of Russia through the Congress that it will avail itself of every opportunity to secure for Russia once more complete sovereignty and independence in her own affairs, and full restoration to her great role in the life of Europe and the modern world. . . . The whole heart of the people of the United States is with the people of Russia in the attempt to free themselves forever from autocratic government and become the masters of their own life.<sup>60</sup>

The Soviet reply, however, indicated the firmness of their commitment to radical socialism:

The Russian Socialistic Federative Republic of Soviets takes advantage of President Wilson's communication to express to all peoples perishing and suffering from the horrors of imperialistic war its warm sympathy and firm belief that the happy time is not far distant when the laboring masses of all countries will throw off the yoke of capitalism and will establish a socialistic state of society, which alone is capable of securing just and lasting peace, as well as the culture and well-being of all laboring people.<sup>61</sup>

The condition of Czechoslovaks within Russia complicated the situation still further. These Czechoslovaks were former prisoners of war released by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, and deserters from the Austro-Hungarian army. Now, they were determined to leave Russia through Siberia and to head for the Western Front. By fighting on the side of the Entente, they hoped to defeat the hated Austro-Hungarian Empire and to establish the value of Czechoslovakia as an independent nation.<sup>62</sup> However, they had encountered resistance from the Soviet army and government and from armed German and Austrian prisoners, which

hindered their exodus. In June of 1918, reports came in that German penetration of Russia was more extensive than expected and that the Czechs were in real danger.<sup>63</sup> The Allies thus had added ammunition for convincing Wilson to agree to an expedition.

When Wilson, succumbing to pressure, finally did reach an agreement with the Japanese which resulted in the landing at Vladivostok of a small American and a small Japanese force (small because Wilson insisted that they be small), the purpose of the expedition was publicly defined in terms which emphasized the *limited* nature of our involvement:

Military action is admissible in Russia now only to render such protection and help as is possible to the Czecho-Slovaks against the armed Austrian and German prisoners who are attacking them, and to steady any efforts at self-government or self-defense in which the Russians themselves may be willing to accept assistance. . . . The Government of the United States wishes to announce . . . that it contemplates no interference with the political sovereignty of Russia, no intervention in her internal affairs—not even in the local affairs of the limited areas which her military force may be obliged to occupy—and no impairment of her territorial integrity, either now or hereafter, but that what we are about to do has as its single and only object the rendering of such aid as shall be acceptable to the Russian people themselves in their endeavors to regain control of their own affairs, their own territory, and their own destiny. The Japanese Government, it is understood, will issue a similar assurance.<sup>64</sup>

Wilson did hope that the interposition of American troops might help the beleaguered Czechoslovaks and other anti-Bolshevik elements in Russia. He did hope to provide Russian liberals with an Allied alternative to Germany as a restorer of social stability. He did see the expedition as a (dubious) means of making the Bolshevik consolidation of power more difficult. However, he was not willing to go to the limit by treating the Bolsheviks as enemies, as he treated the Germans as enemies. It is significant that Wilson never directly criticized the Bolshevik government in his speeches while he frequently lambasted the government in Germany.

Later, there would be further indications of Wilson's unwillingness to define the American mission in terms of opposition to the Russian Revolution. Albert N. Tarulis describes the Wilson administration's adoption of a "do-nothing" policy in regard to Russia's relations with the Baltics. Due to his belief that the Bolshevik Revolution was only temporary and due to his admiration for the Russian people, Wilson "viewed with disapproval any step that potentially could weaken the future Russia."<sup>65</sup> Thus, in spite of his espousal of the rights of small states, Wilson ignored the pleas of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia for help in achieving independence, believing that Russia could not survive economically without the Baltic ports and that Russia needed a safety zone in the Baltic Littoral.<sup>66</sup> Even more significant in light of his opposition to imperialism was Wilson's reaction when the Bolsheviks began spreading bolshevism to the Baltic

areas by force. The administration refused either to grant recognition or to lend military help to those enduring the Bolshevik invasion.

Tarulis argues that, by the end of 1918, intervention might have accomplished a lot. Germany had capitulated; Allied navies traversed the Baltic Sea, and their troops were deployed in Belgium and France. "Landing under such conditions would not have presented any great logistical problem. In fact, the anti-Bolshevik Russians were urging the Allies to grasp the opportunity."<sup>67</sup> London recognized the opportunity but Washington did not. The United States avoided any action which might be interpreted as signaling the intent of entering into de facto relations with the Baltic governments. Reports of the inefficiency of these governments only confirmed the administration in its decision.<sup>68</sup>

Although he did refuse to recognize the Bolsheviks, Wilson would eventually be willing to sit with them at a conference table. In January 1919, he would approve a British proposal to invite all the opposing Russian groups to Paris to try to reconcile them. Again, his approach to the Soviet form of imperialism and his approach to the German imperialism stand in glaring opposition. While Wilson viewed an end to German imperialism as an absolute prerequisite to peace, he indicated that Russian imperialism might be accommodated. Although he did condition the conference on a complete withdrawal of Bolshevik troops from Poland and Lithuania, he made no mention of Latvia and Estonia. Nor did he pressure the Bolsheviks when they refused to comply with these preconditions.<sup>69</sup> (The unified anti-Bolshevik governments in Siberia, Archangel and southern Russia would refuse to attend the Conference, rejecting consideration of a cease-fire on terms other than complete withdrawal of the Bolsheviks from their lands.)

The Wilson administration would finally decide that it would consider the problem of the Baltic provinces at the Peace Conference on the basis of self-determination. It was agreed that a special military mission under British command would be sent to advise the Baltic governments on the best means of defense against the Germans and the Bolsheviks. Although this did indicate a shift in U.S. policy, the United States preferred not to see the mission as an interallied one.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the administration would respond with absolute disgust to Marshall Foch's suggestion that Allied armies be used to put down the Bolsheviks.<sup>71</sup> Thus, the Versailles Treaty would eliminate German influence from all territories that belonged to Russia during the war, but would leave the Baltic provinces to be preyed upon by the Russians.

We should not allow the label "internationalist" to lead us to think Wilson's principles were equally asserted wherever they encountered resistance. Although various works emphasize the parallels between Wilson's policies toward Russia and his policies toward Germany, we should acknowledge these things:

1. Germany was our official "enemy." All of Wilson's actions and words revealed the fact that the United States and Germany were at war.

2. While Wilson exerted the utmost pressure on the German government, making explicit his belief that lasting peace depended upon radical reform of the German government, Wilson pressured the Bolsheviks only indirectly and hesitantly. He described the Siberian Mission as "aid" to the Russian people, refused to pressure the Bolsheviks regarding their disregard for the rights of Baltic peoples and refused to allow American troops to be used in direct opposition to Bolshevik forces.
3. Wilson viewed bolshevism as primarily a reaction to injustices and iniquities of autocratic and imperialist systems; he, therefore, viewed the defeat of autocracy and imperialism as a primary means of undermining bolshevism. Autocracy and imperialism, however, were viewed by him as entrenched and habitual patterns; therefore, the defeat of bolshevism was not helpful in opposing them. Instead, "force to the utmost" was required.
4. Wilson did hope to pose a liberal-democratic alternative to both the left and the right, but evidence suggests that he knew rhetoric was not enough. In the case of the right, persuasion had to be accompanied by force. In the case of the left, rhetoric had to be accompanied by good deeds; the virtues of democracy and its ability to stand as an alternative to the communist *kind* of anti-imperialism had to be demonstrated in actions as well as words. If democracy wanted to rebuild the world, it had to prove itself.

As would Truman, Wilson argued for the congruence of mission and power. Good behavior and steadfast observance of American principles was, he believed, precisely that which would dismantle the arguments of the left and heighten our prestige. Even in Wilson's time, this tactic was not as easy as it seemed; for good behavior toward certain groups sometimes meant the abandonment of others. If we applied the principle of non-interference to the Bolsheviks, wouldn't the White Russians and the Baltic governments view that as an abandonment of our commitment to their rights? When we respected the "integrity" of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, didn't the nationalities view that as an abasement of the principles of democracy and self-determination? When we eventually reversed our policy and espoused the cause of nationalities, didn't the Austro-Hungarian government view that as an abasement of the principle of integrity and sovereignty of nations in that we were intentionally promoting the decay of a sovereign nation-state? And couldn't Wilson's disintegrative words and actions toward the German state be viewed in exactly the same light?

These and other conflicts foretold that internationalism might not be so easy to achieve. Decisions had to be made regarding the definition of principles, the determination of which principles applied to a given situation and which principle might have to be temporarily abandoned in extreme situations such as war. Wilson indeed made such decisions. His "idealism" was not remote from "reality"; it was part and parcel of it.

The ironic intermingling of opposites during the first year of our participation in the war reflected the complexity of our decisions as "beneficent" Americans who were also enemies in a merciless war. Wilson attempted to unify the world behind common beliefs and goals even as he divisively portrayed Germany as

the center of evil. His distinction between the German people and their government allowed him to depict the war as actually promoting unity with the German people even as he inspired strife and disunity within Germany. An internationalism based on a dream of world harmony and peace intermingled with an unprecedented American participation in the divisions of Europe and with America's use of "force to the utmost." Wilson tried to make his country the moral leader of the world even as he led his country to sacrifice or forsake some of its principles for the sake of the Alliance. The attempt to make American institutions and values predominate intermingled with the eschewing of nationalism as an irrational and destructive philosophy. Wilson's words revealed the United States as benefactor and redeemer but also as uncompromising destroyer. He drew a connection between internal and external forms of consent, or conversely, of repression, so that suddenly, the principle of consent became a reason for interfering with and even dictating to other governments.

Wilson extolled the universal principles of democracy; indeed the proliferation of democracy became a primary principle of American foreign policy, and yet Wilson was ready to make peace with Germany's undemocratic Allies and to apply different standards and methods in his opposition to the undemocratic ways of the Russians than he applied to the undemocratic ways of the Germans. Wilson exhibited a traditional opposition to the balance of power along with a willingness to participate in a League of Nations which increasingly had as one of its main objectives the creation of a front against future aggressors.

These inconsistencies or tensions within American foreign policy were in part the result of deviations from our traditions which we had to make for the sake of the war. But they were also the result of an interaction of American ideas with European ideas, and of new ideas with old ideas regarding our mission and power. This interaction of seemingly conflictual elements—all within the policies and ideas of one president—points again to the inadequacy of the realist/idealist dichotomy as a framework for the study of American foreign policy. Although some of the events of the war are difficult to define without these categories (above), these categories belie the complexity of Wilson's decisions and problems. At the same time, this interaction of elements points to the inadequacy of those consensual theories that refuse to acknowledge change as change, preferring instead to describe all American activity as manifestations of the same "liberal-capitalist" phenomenon. Although Wilson was truly a liberal-capitalist, liberal-capitalism was changing and evolving, even as it sought to endure. Only a closed mind would describe America's dramatic upheaval during the first year of its participation in the Great War in terms of a consensus regarding liberal-capitalist values.



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## *Chapter 4*

# The Expansion of Democratic War Aims: Self-Determination and the Disintegration of Empires

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Centuries of subjugation have not destroyed the racial aspirations of the many distinct peoples of Eastern Europe, nor have they accepted the sordid ideals of their political military masters. They have survived the slow persecutions of peace as well as the agonies of war and now demand recognition for their just claims to autonomy and self-government. (Wilson's "Four-Minute Address," July 4, 1918)

The dilemmas the United States faced during World War I made its mission more complex than before. A simplicity and lucidity of ideas was easier to maintain when the United States was less active in foreign affairs, when it had fewer decisions to make regarding which principles applied to which situation, whether and when a given principle applied to a given situation and which principles should be given priority over others. Entrance into the war not only tested and strained our ideals by forcing us to become intimately involved with those whose ideals were different from our own. It also required that we become more specific about our ideals: What exactly did we mean by them and what were we willing to do for them? Principles which had always seemed self-evident suddenly seemed less so. Principles which had always seemed to complement each other suddenly seemed to diverge. Traditionally sacrosanct tenets of American foreign policy suddenly seemed invalid.

Wartime policy decisions had a perplexing effect on the meaning of "America." Each time we made a decision which represented a departure from past practices or a new interpretation of traditional principles, we changed our self-definition ever so slightly. These new facets of our foreign policy and interpretations of our principles have been discussed regarding Wilson's policies toward

Germany. New complications were, however, no more evident in his policies toward Germany than they were in his policies toward Austria-Hungary.

In the history of America's wartime relations with Austria-Hungary, the tenets of self-determination, of the right to government by consent, of territorial integrity, of gradualism, and even of democracy itself, are chameleons whose significance and relation to each other constantly change. Before delving into the complexities, however, let us review the basics: What, generally, was the situation in Austria-Hungary during the war and what, generally, was the American attitude and approach toward it?

Victor S. Mamatey argues convincingly that Wilsonian principles did not create nationalistic uprisings in East Central Europe but rather served as inspiration for those nationalities already desiring reforms or independence.<sup>1</sup> Even before the United States entered the war and even before Wilson and the Allies began to advocate independence for the Austro-Hungarian peoples, trouble was brewing in Austria-Hungary. As early as the seventeenth century the seeds of discontent had been sown. The Thirty Years' War had ended in the expulsion of the native protestant nobility and their replacement by an alien nobility which became German in culture.<sup>2</sup> By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Austria-Hungary ruled over a vast territory that included much of the former Ottoman Empire. The Congress of Vienna rebuffed the challenge to feudal privileges and divine rights created by the French Revolution. Nevertheless, Austria-Hungary witnessed new expressions of ethnic nationalism which received their inspiration from Germany and Italy.<sup>3</sup> Overlapping historical and ethnic claims made some nationalities discordant. The Habsburgs exploited these rivalries between "nationalities" in order to maintain control.

In 1867, the monarchy adopted a policy designed to appease the most aggressive and elite nationalities by allowing them to suppress others. According to Mamatey, this policy "doomed" the Empire:

It was in effect an alliance between the Germans of Austria and the Magyars of Hungary against the rest of the nationalities, or more especially an alliance between the ruling classes of Austria and Hungary. . . . By abandoning their pretended role of impartial arbiters between the nationalities and by siding with one group of them against another, the Habsburgs definitely killed the "Austrian idea" and deprived the Empire of its *raison d'être*.<sup>4</sup>

Although some reforms were made in the early part of the twentieth century, the monarchy continued to alienate and offend certain groups with its dictatorial methods and its policy of divide and rule.

Nationalist ideals were encouraged by both German romanticism and by romantic nationalism exported from the West. As Mark Mazower shows, these ideals were not an inevitability in the Balkans. He points out that today's histories are often written by descendents of nationalist patriots. The idea that ethnic divisions in this part of the world were age-old and "fixed" is to some

extent a myth: Under the Ottoman Empire, the region had seen the peaceful coexistence of many groups who often divided themselves more along city and rural lines than along ethnic lines. Neither Christian nor Muslim subjects attached as much importance to ethnicity as they did to religion, with Muslim subjects tending to have higher status. Even religious categories were fluid, however: "Neither the Byzantine nor the Ottoman Empires were ethnically based polities. For centuries, conversion and acculturation opened up elite careers to men of different backgrounds."<sup>5</sup>

Ann Wilson explains well the rise of ethnic nationalism in the 1800s: "Inspired by German romanticism, small groups of intellectuals began to recognize the power of their own people's linguistic and cultural traditions. By the 1840's, most areas of the empire began to experience cultural renaissances that were framed in national terms."<sup>6</sup> Like Mark Mazower, Ann Wilson dispels the idea that nationalism was historically determined:

In the highly heterogeneous South Slavic lands, cultural leaders had the option of promoting nationalisms that were based around single ethnic categories: Slovene, Croat, Serb. This was the practice that was most common among other ethnic groups, from the Czechs to the Poles. But many, particularly in Croatia, hoped for a pan-Slavic unity in rebelling against the Hapsburgs. *Whether it divided ethnicities or fused them together, the birth of nationalism relied on an invented narrative of unity.* Nationalists mined their histories for commonalities of culture, language or religion, and applied their findings to the construction of budding nationalist political movements. Though cased in the language of nature and destiny, there was nothing inherently "natural" about this process.<sup>7</sup>

World War I itself was, of course, triggered by nationalist animosity. Again, Ann Wilson's account is helpful:

During the same period, the territories under Ottoman rule experienced similar nationalist turbulence. After decades of uprisings, Bulgaria declared its independence from Turkey in 1908. Four years later, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece and Bulgaria, with the support czarist Russia, fought what is called the first Balkan War against Turkey—only to fight amongst themselves a year later over that land they won in 1912. For the first time since medieval times, Serbia regained control of Kosovo, known then as "old Serbia." Of course, this occurred at the expense of the newly independent Albania, whose nationalist movement was born in the same area among the majority Albanian local population. . . . On June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary was assassinated by a Serbian nationalist, igniting World War I.<sup>8</sup>

By the time of the outbreak of war, there were three main groups which desired independence from the Empire: the "Yugoslavs," comprised of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the "Czechoslovaks," comprised of the Czechs and the Slovaks, and the Rumanians. The Yugoslavs envisioned that they would become independent by uniting with Serbia, the Rumanians with Rumania. The Czechoslovaks, however, had no existing country to which they could refer as a

"base" for their operations. (Their dynamic leader, Professor Thomas G. Masaryk, compensated for this disadvantage, however, with his intelligence and determination.) In addition, many Poles desired independence from Austria-Hungary, as well as from Russia and Germany. They hoped to form their new state by lopping off from these regions territory which was Polish in its history, population and "culture." Mamatey describes well the mixed feelings with which the Entente governments viewed these independence movements:

On the one hand, they were anxious to encourage these activities to weaken the Central Powers, but on the other they were reluctant to accept their ultimate aim: the complete dismemberment of Austria-Hungary. . . . The Habsburg Empire had been a part of the European balance-of-power system for four centuries, and the Entente statesmen feared the consequences of its disappearance. While western statesmen feared lest the void be filled with Russian satellites, Russian statesmen feared lest it be filled with western-oriented democracies, and the effect particularly among the Russian subject peoples.<sup>9</sup>

Wilson, too, had mixed feelings. While the principles he espoused could not help but encourage the nationalities, he initially had little taste for dismembering the vast old Austrian Empire. In the Fourteen Points Address, he advocated autonomy for the nationalities, but conspicuously did not go so far as to advocate independence (above). Nevertheless, the subject nationalities had come, by the time of this address, to see Wilson as their champion. On May 27, 1916, Wilson had declared that "every people has a right to choose the sovereignty under which they shall live." They viewed this and other Wilsonian pronouncements as pertaining to them, and saw in Wilson the key to their independence.

The process by which Wilson and the Entente powers did finally come to favor independence for the nationalities is part and parcel of the process by which they came to change their minds regarding the best strategy for winning the war. For Wilson, this change was principled as well as strategic, for it cohered with the tenet of self-determination. The fervency with which Wilson would advocate self-determination for these nationalities would have reverberations right into the twenty-first century, for, as we shall see, the goals of nationalism were in many ways contrary to the goals of democratic liberalism.

At first, however, Allied war strategy included the attempt to separate Austria-Hungary from its German ally by getting it to accept a separate peace. This made independence for the nationalities both undesirable and unnecessary: The Allies could not afford to favor independence so long as they sought to create favorable relations between Austria-Hungary and themselves. (Of course, it is possible that if the threat of dismemberment had been greater, the incentive for Austria-Hungary to separate from Germany would have been greater.) Wilson did, nevertheless, make it clear that a separate peace would depend upon federalization and reorganization of the Empire; although he did not at first advocate independence for the nationalities, he *did* advocate reform.

Although many overtures and discussions ensued between Austria-Hungary

and the Entente Powers, and although Emperor Charles gave many reasons to hope that he might agree to a separate peace, those hopes dwindled when, succumbing to pressure from Germany, Charles made it clear that no peace would be made without consulting with and including his German ally. On February 24, 1918, Lord Northcliffe submitted a memorandum to English Foreign Secretary Balfour summarizing possible Allied policies toward Austria, and arguing that the one so far chosen had failed. These possible policies were: "(a) to work for a separate peace with the Emperor, the Court, and the aristocracy, on the principle of not interfering with the domestic affairs of the Habsburg Monarchy and of leaving its territory almost or quite intact; and "(b) to try to break the power of Austria-Hungary, as the weakest link in the chain of enemy States, by supporting and encouraging all anti-German and pro-Ally peoples and tendencies." Lord Northcliffe concluded:

The (a) policy has been tried without success. The Habsburgs are not free agents. They have not the power, even though they may wish, to break with Germany: (1) Because they are controlled by the internal structure of their dominions the dual system which gives Germany decisive leverage over them through the Germans of Austria and the Magyars of Hungary; and (2) Because the Allies cannot offer them acceptable terms without breaking with Italy. It remains to try the (b) policy.<sup>10</sup>

Due primarily to this logic, the Allies adopted policy B as the best tactic for winning the war. Both the private documents of the State Department and Wilson's public speeches began to reflect this new approach. In the "Four Points Speech" on July 4, 1918, one of the points was "The settlement of every question, whether of territory, of sovereignty, of economic arrangement, or of political relationship, upon the basis of *the free acceptance of that settlement by the people immediately concerned*, and not upon the basis of the material interest or advantage of any other nation or people which may desire a different settlement for the sake of its own exterior influence of mastery."<sup>11</sup> Wilson made it clear just what he meant by the "people immediately concerned." He added in his "Four-Minute Address" on the same day:

Centuries of subjugation have not destroyed the racial aspirations of the many distinct peoples of Eastern Europe, nor have they accepted the sordid ideals of their political and military masters. They have survived the slow persecutions of peace as well as the agonies of war and now demand recognition for their just claims to autonomy and self-government.<sup>12</sup>

Such, then, is a superficial description of the process by which Wilson came to abandon hopes of a separate peace with Austria-Hungary and to adopt a policy of supporting and even encouraging independence for the nationalities within that empire. Let us now look at Wilson's policies toward Austria-Hungary in

more depth, in terms of their implication for the United States' definition of itself and its mission.

I have suggested that the initial policy of seeking a separate peace with Austria-Hungary, while neglecting to espouse the cause of nationalities, was not inconsistent with traditional American foreign policy. It was not within the American tradition to incite revolutions in distant lands. It was within that tradition to recognize established foreign governments so long as they were tolerated by their own people. Furthermore, it was within the American tradition to do what is necessary in a "just" war, albeit within the guidelines of civilized conduct. If seeking a separate peace with Austria-Hungary was deemed the most expeditious way of bringing the war to a conclusion, there was nothing in traditional American principles to prevent Wilson from doing so. What made this policy contradictory was Wilson's insinuation that the American mission included seeing to it that its *universal principles were universally applied*. Wilson had spoken of going to war for the defense and vindication "of the rights of people everywhere to live as they have a right to live under the very principles of our nation." He had made democracy a primary principle not just of American government, but of American foreign policy. He had done this by insisting that peace, justice and order in the world depended upon adherence to the principle of consent on two levels: the internal consent of peoples to their government and the consent of peoples to the influence or rule of any foreign power. It was against this broad definition of the American mission that Wilson's original unwillingness to support the cause of the nationalities of East Central Europe seems contradictory.

On February 8, 1918, when a separate peace with Austria-Hungary still seemed viable, the Chargé in Switzerland sent Professor George D. Herron's reports on the conversations of Austro-Hungarian Prime Minister Heinrich Lammasch with the State Department. Herron reported on an "extraordinary" Austrian proposal for peace. Apparently, the Emperor had permitted Lammasch to indicate that he would welcome America's dictating the internal reconstruction of the empire. America could make it a requirement of peace that Austria give integration and autonomy (not independence) to all nationalities. The Emperor, accepting this requirement, would confront Germany with the demand that it make peace. If Germany refused, the Emperor would agree to a separate peace.<sup>13</sup> The reasons Herron gave for Wilson *not* to respond favorably to the Emperor's proposal are fascinating. A favorable response would, he implied, contravene the universal principles Wilson had espoused, disappointing and angering those whose hopes he had raised:

We could take advantage of this situation and make separate peace with Austria. Of that I am sure . . . but we would betray and without meaning to, the hopes of all these peoples of the world that are looking to us. Even in this conversation it came out that not in the whole history of the world has the world looked to a nation as it now looks to America. Looks to us. Trusts us. It looks to us to make good our platform of a world democracy

and people in fellowship with each other. And so the world has never looked to a man as it now looks to President Wilson and has never trusted a man as it trusts President Wilson. . . . We really would destroy by this compromise, that faith that is rising in the hearts of all these peoples in the world. . . . I have sweated blood every night over this, to say that it is real if it costs all these millions of our lives and actually breaks up and smashes the old world and makes a new one, it is worth it.<sup>14</sup>

Wilson gave serious consideration to the Emperor's proposal. Indeed, in a speech to Congress on February 11, he reiterated his support of autonomy for the nationalities, at the same time drawing a distinction between the recent speeches of Austrian Foreign Minister Czernin and German Chancellor von Hertling, suggesting that the Austrian's speech held the prospect of a reasonable peace while the German's did not.<sup>15</sup> The Emperor, however, responded to Wilson's speech with a secret message which reverted to his original proposal for a general peace on the basis of the status quo ante, seeming to ignore his recent proposal.

As Herron's report indicated, the pursuit of national security and the proliferation of democracy were not always compatible. Wilson had to choose between accepting the Emperor's proposal as the most expeditious way of ending the war, and rejecting it on the grounds that it would retard the cause of democracy in Central Europe. In this case, the dichotomies of realism and idealism and of mission and power seemed to force themselves on us. However, the conflict could just as easily be described as a conflict *between* American ideals. Because he had made the proliferation of democracy a primary tenet of American foreign policy, Wilson rendered American foreign policy contradictory wherever it conformed to that *other* principle of American foreign policy, the right to self-defense *regardless* of whether it expanded democracy's parameters. When the American mission was seen in terms of setting an enlightened example, or in terms of spreading our influence through contact, there was no conflict if we persecuted a defensive war in whatever way necessary. Once Wilson declared war-for-democracy, conflict entered into the American mission.

There were other ambiguities in Wilson's foreign policy toward Austria-Hungary, some of which had less to do with conflicts between different principles than with dissonance regarding the *meaning* of the principles. A close look at Wilson's use of the term "self-determination" reveals that it was used in three senses: to mean the right of nations to determine their own destinies free from foreign control; to mean the right of individuals to determine their own form of government (in this case, self-determination being synonymous with government by consent); and to mean the right of certain ethnic or racial groups to determine their own destiny by freeing themselves from allegiance to empires and creating *new* governments based on their unique historical and cultural claims. In an address to Congress on February 11, 1918, in which Wilson discussed German and Austrian replies to a statement of Allied War Aims, all three senses of the term emerge and converge:



Is Count Von Hertling not aware that he is speaking in the court of mankind, that all the awakened nations of the world now sit in judgment in what every public man, of whatever nation, may say in the issues of a conflict which has spread to every region of the world? There shall be no annexations, no contributions, no punitive damages. Peoples are not to be handed about from one sovereignty to another by an international conference or an understanding between rivals and antagonists. National aspirations must be respected; peoples may now be dominated and governed only by their consent. Self-determination is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their own peril. . . . The war had its roots in the disregard of the rights of small nations and of nationalities which lacked the union and the force to make good their claim to determine their own allegiances and their own forms of political life. Covenants must now be entered into which will render such things impossible for the future; and those covenants must be backed by the nations that love their own allegiances and their own forms of political life.<sup>16</sup>

Interestingly, this speech was presented *before* the adoption of "Policy B." In it, Wilson defended "autonomy," not independence for the Austro-Hungarian nationalities. This would seem to imply that insofar as Wilson advocated self-determination for the nationalities, he meant that which is synonymous with the right to government by consent, not that which is synonymous with the right to establish new states along cultural-ethnic lines. And yet, the speech seemed to contain the other two definitions of self-determination as well. According to Robert Lansing, Wilson *intentionally* rendered the meaning of the term ambiguous. About his previous speech declaring war with Austria, Lansing said:

The President's words and the Austrian comments are of special interest in connection with the doctrine of self-determination which Mr. Wilson later announced in very definite terms and which Count Czernin speaks of as a "catchword." To harmonize the two ideas is difficult, but the quoted sentences from his address seem sufficiently ambiguous to remove by a bit of sophistry the seeming contradiction. Since the President avoids stating the character and size of the political unit in which "their affairs are left in their own hands" he does not commit himself to a particular policy, though his first sentence seems to make the entire Empire, as then constituted, the unit for self-determination, or, as Czernin expressed it, "the right of nations to govern themselves."<sup>17</sup>

Not surprisingly, the nationalities, unlike Czernin, often imputed to Wilson's use of the term the third sense, that of the right of certain ethnic groups to create new governments based on their unique historical claims. Wilson had, after all, said "national aspirations must be respected." Once the policy of disrupting and disintegrating the Empire had been formally adopted, such principles as self-determination did indeed unambiguously acquire the third meaning in Wilson's speeches, although they continued to include the first two meanings as well.

What is interesting about this third meaning of self-determination is that it deflates the other two meanings. Let us examine, first, the way in which the self-determination of ethnic groups conflicts with the self-determination of

nations. By the very act of advocating independence for ethnic groups within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Wilson implied that it was not, after all, up to that nation-state to determine its own destiny. Rather, it was the right of outsiders not only to speak for, but to fight for the rights of insiders, even if that interference led to the disintegration of the empire. Wilson indicated that the internal structure of other nations had become (1) something we could manipulate as a tactic of war and (2) something we were by principle *entitled* to manipulate. As the chaotic postwar situation would demonstrate, choosing self-determination over the sovereignty of nations would frustrate that *other* Wilsonian goal of creating a *stable* world order. The principle of sovereignty connoted stability, whereas self-determination invited transition and flux.

In addition, advocacy of self-determination for ethnic groups contravened Wilson's frequent depiction of the American nation as a melting pot, and his assertion that in order to *be* a nation it had to be a place where people subordinated their particular interests to the interests of the whole and where ethnic groups subordinated their allegiance to that group to their allegiance to the national government (above). It also contravened his praise for government which preferred no particular faction, but which respected the rights of all individuals equally. (Of course, one reason that the nationalities desired independence was that they had been treated *as* groups, manipulated *as* groups. Having been oppressed as ethnic groups, they saw liberation as an ethnic group phenomenon.) Wilson's espousal of self-determination of ethnic groups, then, rendered the meaning of that term ambiguous for, when applied to nationalities, it seemed to preclude its application to nations.

Let us now look at the way in which self-determination of groups deflates self-determination of individuals. Self-determination on the basis of race and ethnicity implies that it is not enough for individuals to have freedom within a nation through consent, majority rule and an impartial legal system. (Wilson ultimately refused the Emperor's offer to federalize and democratize the Empire as insufficient.) There may be a minority *group* which, because of its history as a distinct cultural or racial unit, has a natural right to leave the nation and form its own. Wilson, who was a great student and admirer of American government, must have had great qualms about championing the rights of minority groups as opposed to individuals in East Central Europe; for the American founders, fearing a majority faction, realized that a (selfish) minority could easily turn into a majority tyrannizing over others. Federalism, checks and balances and the separation of powers were designed to prevent the undue concentration of powers in any one group and to ensure that individuals rule. Due to these safeguards, majority rule would not be synonymous with group rule, the majority on certain issues and in certain places not being the *same* majority as in others. As the American people became more tolerant, the democratic ideal increasingly depended upon accepting as many groups as possible to our shores. These groups however, were accepted as individuals and were expected to comply with the "rule of law" which, by protecting individuals, was to embody equality and

impartiality. Self-determination for ethnic groups seems at odds with this vision of government.

Indeed, once the minorities in Central Europe achieved independence they would become new majorities which frequently oppressed new minorities. For example, the Poles would exploit their position as a group, attacking Ukrainians, Czechs, Germans and others in order to expand their frontiers, and would oppress the minorities they acquired along the way. Paul Johnson describes the postwar situation well:

Central and Eastern Europe was now gathering in the grisly harvest of irreconcilable nationalisms which had been sown throughout the nineteenth century. Or, to vary the metaphor, Versailles lifted the lid on the seething, noisome pot and the stench of the brew therein filled Europe until Hitler, then Stalin slammed it down again by force.<sup>18</sup>

Wilson's ambiguous use of self-determination and related terms creates confusion regarding America's mission, regarding just what this principle means. It is interesting that the president who championed anti-imperialism, eloquently defending the sanctity of each nation and its right to freedom from foreign interference, was the same who intervened in the political affairs of other nations, going so far as to advocate the *dissolution* of Austria-Hungary and the *overhaul* of the German government. Interesting, too, is the combination of praise for the melting pot and the priority of individual and nation over race and group with his advocacy of self-determination of groups on the basis of historical-ethnic claims.

What, then, did American foreign policy stand for? Did self-determination pertain to the individual, the nation, the ethnic group or all three? If it pertained to all three, it left questions regarding the relation of the majority to the minority, of the group to the individual and the nation, and of our nation to other nations. Most importantly, it cast doubt regarding the relation of the principles of Wilsonianism and the principles of the American founders. Our mission seemed to acquire a new identity, an identity forged out of our participation in a turbulent world war, a war which disrupted previous social and political structures, paving the way for new ones.

The fact that those nationalities which were freed to determine their own destinies frequently behaved as tyrannous majorities raises another question regarding American principles: What is the relation of the principle of self-determination and the principle of democracy? Although Wilson championed the proliferation of democracy and the self-determination of peoples simultaneously, the two are not always compatible. For example, when, on November 14, 1915, the Czechoslovaks formed a movement for independence, it was a foregone conclusion that the Czechoslovak state would be a monarchy under a Romanov prince.<sup>19</sup> It was only later, with the demise of the Romanovs and the influence of Wilson's inspiring speeches, that they began to envision the Czechoslovak state as a democracy oriented toward the West.

Poland is a particularly provocative example. Those Poles who advocated the rebirth of Poland at first disagreed over whether the Polish state should be oriented toward Austria and Germany or toward Romanov Russia, none of which were democratic. Indeed, the Central Powers and Russia, vying with each other for friends and influence, each promised their support for Polish autonomy.<sup>20</sup> Even after the Bolshevik Revolution and after the Western-oriented Poles became disenchanted with Germany and Austria, most Polish leaders did not envision the Polish state as a democracy.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, Wilson became increasingly committed to the Polish cause, advocating Poland's right to self-determination. An examination of Wilson's support for the Polish movement reveals the extent to which Wilson had become involved in cross-purposes.

In 1916, the Polish pianist and patriot Ignace Jan Paderewski, part of the pro-Russian bloc, came to the United States to muster support for the Polish cause. Actually, Wilson's and the Americans' sympathy for the Poles had already been aroused by German interference with relief efforts for the starving Polish people. With Colonel House firmly on his side, Paderewski gradually convinced Wilson of the justice of his cause. (The justice of that cause was, in reality, dubious.)<sup>22</sup> There were strategic as well as sentimental reasons for Wilson to be receptive to the Poles. In the summer of 1917, the British foreign office—afraid that with the disintegration of Russian armies the Germans and Austrians might use Polish troops, and that Germans were gaining the advantage with the Poles because of their "manifestos" regarding independence—suggested that "all Poles, whether of German, Austrian or Prussian origin, living in the countries of the Allied powers would be granted open recognition as friends and potential allies."<sup>23</sup> As a corollary, they felt that a committee should be established to represent the Poles in each Allied country.

Having permitted this, Wilson moved a step further. On November 7, 1917, the United States recognized the Polish National Committee in Paris as an official organization. In addition, one of the points in Wilson's Fourteen Points Address concerned Poland. Wilson said: "An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputable Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant."<sup>24</sup> This was self-determination in the third sense, signifying the right of Polish peoples to separate from the Austrians, Germans and Russians (within whose larger territories they were minorities) and to claim those parts of German, Austrian and Russian territory which were Polish in population, origin and culture as their own.

Wilson's support contributed greatly to the Polish cause. In *Woodrow Wilson and the Rebirth of Poland*, Louis L. Gerson concludes:

Woodrow Wilson's friendship for Poland was one of the important factors that led to the reestablishment of a Polish state. The President was one of the first leaders of a powerful country to champion the cause of Poland. His speech of February 1917 and his

declaration of the Fourteen Points in January 1918 encouraged the Poles in Europe and in America to unite and fight more vigorously for Polish independence. Before that, as Colonel House rightly observed, they had been divided among themselves and had not even dreamt that after the war a united, free, and independent Poland might be established.<sup>25</sup>

And yet, in spite of all the support he gave them, Wilson seems to have concerned himself little with the details of Polish history or even with the details regarding the objectives and activities of the Polish leaders he supported. What is intriguing about Wilson's commitment to the Polish cause is that he made it without committing them to his cause of democracy. In a president for whom democratization of Germany was an absolute prerequisite of peace, this is extraordinary.

Indeed, probably because he was familiar with them, he supported Paderewski and Dmowski in their attempts to wrest power away from the then more liberal Joseph Pilsudski.<sup>26</sup> Although Pilsudski would later confront postwar chaos with a dictatorial approach, he was then very popular among the Polish masses and soldiery and had been acknowledged as Chief of State by the Lublin government. Once the new state was organized with Paderewski as Premier, the men Wilson had supported showed their true colors. They proceeded to conquer territories in Estonia, Livonia, Lithuania, the Ukraine and White Russia, Galicia, Czechoslovakia and Germany without regard to the wishes of other nationalities. The governmental structures they set up along the way were more aristocratic than democratic. They hoped to acquire as much territory as possible so that they could present the Peace Conference with a *fait accompli*.

Clearly, the principle of self-determination and the principle of democracy had run amuck. Self-determination for some could mean the oppression of others. How ironic that Wilson, the quintessential democrat and anti-imperialist, had been instrumental in legitimizing these men. Wilson did not learn of Dmowski's conception of the new Poland until the Peace Conference where, having committed himself to the Polish cause, he did not turn his back on them. He did support Lloyd George in the attempt to mitigate their most extreme claims. He refused, however, to allow American troops to be used to police Poland or other new states until they had stable governments.

The mixed results of liberation policies raises the question of whether liberation would have been better served if it had been accompanied by some degree of guidance. Absent were the paternalism of European imperialism and of U.S. relations with Latin America. As with any form of freedom, self-determination does not necessarily lead to justice, for it is not merely freedom but what one *does* with freedom that matters. Thus, viable democracies counter their emphasis on freedom with an emphasis on justice, fairness and the overriding national interest. In spite of legitimate arguments that the United States suffers from a lack of specific moral standards, the founders did at least provide institutional checks to random human activity and did leave us with a firm sense of the

dignity and rights of every person. There is still in our political life an emphasis on equitability, fairness and the good of the whole.

Wilson himself believed that freedom had to have moorings to work; a prerequisite to Philippine independence had to be education regarding democratic values and practices (above). In his support of self-determination for European nationalities, however, this emphasis on gradualism and this didacticism were mostly absent. Wilson rarely questioned or pressured leaders of nationalities regarding just what they would *do* with their freedom. Except for the espousal of general democratic principles and occasional pleas for moderation in his speeches, he made no significant attempt to guide and lead those nationalities gradually toward the formation of democracies. Indeed, having been instrumental in setting them free, Wilson seemed simply to let them go.

It is an irony of contemporary American foreign policy that the more we advocate freedom for foreign peoples, the more we are faced with the decision of just how much control we should exert over the process of liberation. Indeed, the history of American foreign policy reveals that as we have taken an active interest in the freedom of increasingly large numbers of people, we have at the same time exerted our power and influence over increasingly large numbers. Our espousal of freedom compels us to ask: Should we guide and educate those whom we free so that their burgeoning freedom expresses itself in democratic forms? And, should we try to influence those who do not desire freedom so that they have the "right" desires? While we have been the main champions of freedom, we have sometimes appeared as freedom's opponents, as we have attempted to control those whom we would like to "liberate," have "liberated" or are "liberating." On the other hand, we have sometimes relinquished control only to have those whom we might have influenced or helped fall prey to anarchy and subjugation. As a nation we have yet to decide on the best way to balance the principle of self-determination with the principle of democracy.

In this sense, the principle of consent turns back upon itself; for in using our power to influence the internal politics of other nations, even if that power is used to create consensual politics, we easily violate the principle of consent as it pertains (as Wilson believed it pertained) to the relations between one nation and another. At the same time, *not* exerting our influence can mean that other leaders are free to violate the principle of consent as it pertains to their own people. Wilson had insisted that the principle of consent had to be considered on the level of both foreign and domestic policy; for a lack of concern for that principle was what united imperialism and autocracy, oppressive empires and oppressive states.

This very assertion points to inconsistency regarding Wilson's own priorities: At the same time that Wilson came to respect the principle of self-determination with regard to Central European nationalities, he came to disregard it in relation to Central European nations. At the same time that he neglected to pressure the nationalities regarding whether their intentions were democratic, he asserted our right to exert the utmost pressure on the internal politics of Germany and

Austria-Hungary on the grounds that they were not democratic. At the same time that he eloquently championed the cause of anti-imperialism, he interfered in the internal politics of other countries to an unprecedented extent.

One of the most significant aspects of Wilson's wartime policies was that they signalled an expanded view of America's mission. That mission which had originally entailed setting a peaceful example had turned active. America's mission qua shining example had evolved into America's mission qua generous benefactor of the needy and oppressed. It was America's *right* to interfere, to demand that the Austro-Hungarian and German Empires be dismantled, with new political forms and even new nations instituted in their stead. Benefiting others served both America's mission and its power. "Helping" the subject peoples in these empires would not only serve the causes of freedom and justice; it would help the United States win the war and befriend it with those with whom it would have to deal at the war's end. In addition, Wilson believed, it would make the world more secure, given that the Empires were bellicose forms of government.

Wilson's response to the peace overtures of Germany and Austria-Hungary was evidence of America's radically new relation to foreign powers: A compromise peace was not enough. Proper settlement of territorial and strategic disputes was not enough. Wilson demanded the dismantling of their political systems and their empires as a prerequisite for peace. To realize what this said about America's new role in the world, imagine that the situation were reversed. Imagine that the United States, realizing defeat on the battlefield, asked Germany for an armistice. Imagine Germany responding that peace would depend upon reform of our politics, revision of our Constitution and withdrawal from the Philippines, Hawaii and Puerto Rico. In New York City on September 17, 1918, Wilson again portrayed democracy and autocracy as irreconcilable opposites, and described this opposition as a factor which had to be addressed *before we made peace*:

We are all agreed that there can be no peace obtained by any kind of bargain or compromise with the governments of the Central Powers, because we have dealt with them already and have seen them deal with other governments that were parties to this struggle, at Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest. They have convinced us that they are without honor and do not intend justice. They observe no covenants, accept no principle but force and their own interest. We cannot "come to terms" with them. They have made it impossible. The German people must by this time be fully aware that we cannot accept the word of those who forced war upon us. We do not think the same thoughts or speak the same language. . . . Germany is constantly intimating the "terms" she will accept; and always finds that the world does not want terms. It wishes the final triumph of justice and fair dealing.<sup>27</sup>

The "price" Germany would have to pay for a peace settlement was this: "impartial justice in every item of the settlement, no matter whose interest is crossed,

and not only impartial justice, but also the satisfaction of the several peoples whose fortunes are dealt with."

In October 1918, realizing defeat on the battlefield and hoping that Wilson's principles would ensure fair and equitable peace terms, Germany asked for an armistice on the basis of the Fourteen Points. In response, in addition to insisting that the Central Powers had to remove themselves from Allied soil and that the Allies would have to be consulted, Wilson indicated that the internal form of the German government would have to change before the United States could accept an armistice. In an October 14 message he referred to a previous address which had insisted upon the "destruction of any arbitrary power anywhere":

The power which has hitherto controlled the German nation is of the sort described here. It is within the choice of the German Nation to alter it. The President's words just quoted naturally constitute a condition precedent to peace, if peace is to come by the action of the German people themselves. The President feels bound to say that the whole process of peace will, in his judgment, depend upon the definiteness and the satisfactory character of the guarantees which can be given in this fundamental matter. It is indispensable that the Governments associated against Germany should know beyond a peradventure with whom they are dealing.<sup>28</sup>

Austria-Hungary, too, asked Wilson for peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points. Again, Wilson's response indicated that an overhaul of the internal political structure would be required. Wilson's commitment to self-determination for Austro-Hungarian nationalities meant that he could no longer accept his own "fourteen points" as a basis for peace. Article Ten had stipulated that "the peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development." Now Wilson had to explain:

Since that sentence was written and uttered to the Congress of the United States the Government of the United States has recognized that a state of belligerency exists between the Czecho-Slovaks and the German and Austrian Empires and that the Czecho-Slovak National Council is a de-facto belligerent government clothed with proper authority to direct the military and political affairs of the Czecho-Slovaks. . . . The President is, therefore, no longer at liberty to accept the mere "autonomy" of these peoples as a basis of peace, but is obliged to insist that they, and not he, shall be the judges of what action on the part of the Austro-Hungarian Government will satisfy their aspirations and their conception of their rights and destiny as members of the family of nations.<sup>29</sup>

Having received assurances from the German government regarding the principles of the Fourteen Points and subsequent addresses, and having received assurances that their wish for peace emanated "not from those who have previously dictated German policy but from ministers who speak for the overwhelming majority of the Reichstag and the people" and that they "accepted humane rules of civilized warfare," Wilson sent a message to Germany accepting



an armistice on October 23. Again, however, Wilson pressured the Germans regarding their form of government. Making fair peace terms contingent upon German political reform, the message stipulated that:

The Government of the United States cannot deal with any but veritable representatives of the German people who have been assured of a genuine constitutional standing as the real rulers of Germany. If it must deal with the military masters and the monarchical autocrats of Germany, or if it is likely to have to deal with them later in regard to the international obligations of the German Empire, it must demand, not peace negotiations, but surrender.<sup>30</sup>

Undoubtedly, Wilson's intense pressure contributed to the ensuing German "revolution." In November, there were reports of revolutionary activity in Germany. The Kaiser was forced to abdicate, and fled to Holland. Prince Max of Baden transferred power to the Social Democrat Ebert, who proclaimed: "The new government will be people's government. Its endeavor will be to bring peace to the German people quickly and to establish liberty which it has gained."<sup>31</sup>

So, too, in Austria-Hungary, Wilson's pressure hastened social reform. On October 25, 1918, the Minister in Switzerland reported:

The effect of the Emperor's proclamation of federalization and of the President's reply to Austria-Hungary has been to complete the demoralization of the country. The Czechs, Jugo-Slavs, Poles, Ruthenians and Germans are engaged in organizing as quickly as possible local administration parliaments. The Vienna government appeals in vain to the people to maintain the present governmental organs until new ones can be created to replace them.<sup>32</sup>

On October 29, the Emperor, bitterly disappointed at Wilson's unwillingness to accept federalization and thorough reform of the empire as a basis for peace, asked for an armistice on the basis of Wilson's last note. After consulting with the Allies, Wilson accepted this request.

On November 2, 1918, Stovall sent the State Department a list of "governmental organs constituted in the process of constitution in Austria-Hungary which should not be lost sight of." The list shows clearly that self-determination for *nationalities* meant the disintegration and abolition of the Austro-Hungarian *nation*. The empire had dissolved into many different components:

1. The Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Government
2. In Austria:
  - (a) The Imperial Austrian government,
  - (b) the newly constituted Government of German-Austria
  - (c) The Czecho-Slovak National Council

3. In Hungary:

- (a) The Royal Hungarian Government
- (b) The Budapest National Council<sup>33</sup>

Stovall added, "This summary does not include Galician Poles, who now politically form a part of Greater Poland, and the Ruthenians, who exert little influence on general situation."

Thus, the United States emerged simultaneously as creator and destroyer, as redeemer and iconoclast. Our mission and power were defined in terms of the dual characteristics of beneficence and destruction. Our opposition to the principles and methods associated with imperialism implied that our foreign policy would stand for fairness and moderation. At the same time, our opposition to those principles and methods was such that we had come to accept nothing less than the ruination of that which we opposed. When Wilson accepted the terms of the Armistice on November 11, he described the event in terms of the triumph of democracy over autocracy: "Everything for which America has fought has been accomplished. It will be our fortunate duty to assist by example, by sober friendly counsel and by material aid in the establishment of just democracy throughout the world."<sup>34</sup>

It was to Wilson the redeemer and benefactor that Germany and Austria-Hungary sued for peace. Even though his fervent opposition to autocracy and imperialism contained the possibility of the demise of their own political structures and even of their nations, it also contained their greatest hope, for it promised to mitigate any imperialistic and exploitative tendencies which the Allies harbored toward Germany and its colonies. Wilsonian principles seemed to promise a just and equitable rather than a mean and vengeful peace.

The fact that the Central Powers turned to Wilson in request of an armistice reveals that Wilson had been right that old world methods created an atmosphere of distrust, hatred and fear; for the Germans preferred to deal with the Americans, whose methods and principles *differed from* their own, than to deal with America's European Allies, whose methods and principles more closely approximated their own principles and methods. In a sense, they were willing to abandon their own ideas and tactics in order to avoid having those same ideas and tactics imposed upon them! However we may criticize Wilson's solutions to the problems of the day, we cannot blame him for recognizing that new ideas were desperately needed. The acceptance of the Fourteen Points and subsequent addresses as a basis for peace seemed to signal that Allied and Central Powers alike were agreed that new methods and ideas in international relations would have to replace the old.

We shall see that the tragedy for Germany was that it was in many ways too late for a fair peace. During the war, the American emphasis on fairness had been mitigated and, in many cases, superseded by the emphasis on victory. The idea was that victory was a prerequisite to fairness. Victory would allow us to be more virtuous internally in that we would not have to be "armed to the teeth,"

adopting militaristic methods in order to defend ourselves against militarism. Victory would also allow us to take a more positive role externally. Having destroyed that which threatened us, we could finally direct our energies toward restoration and the creation of a more moderate and rational world. The belief that victory had to come first led Wilson to neglect using bargaining power with the Allies when he had it. He hoped that at war's end he would be able to influence and direct them. But once the Allies were victorious, they were less, not more, willing to listen to Wilson's advice.

During the war, the United States assumed great responsibility for the world's future stability and happiness. The more peoples it "freed," the more responsibilities it assumed. If it left the people it helped to free alone, it was to some extent responsible if their efforts to create a viable political life for themselves ended in failure. If it interfered with those efforts, and those efforts ended in failure, the United States was still to blame. Once the mission of the United States expanded to mean the universal application of its own principles, the United States opened itself to charges of hypocrisy and greed wherever it did not defend and work for those principles, and wherever, in working for those principles, it violated democracy's own tenets. The United States was susceptible to both charges even before the war's end.

## *Chapter 5*

# The Bittersweet Legacy of Ideas: Wilson Leaves an Indelible Mark

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It is moral force that is irresistible. It is moral force as much as physical that has defeated the effort to subdue the world. Words have cut as deep as the sword. The knowledge that wrong was being attempted has aroused the nations. They have gone out like men on a crusade. No other cause could have drawn so many nations together. They knew that an outlaw was abroad who purposed unspeakable things. It is from quiet places like this all over the world that the forces accumulate which presently will overbear any attempt to accomplish evil on a large scale. Like the rivulets gathering into the river and the river into the seas, there come from communities like this streams that fertilize the consciences of men, and it is the conscience of the world that we are trying to place upon the throne which others would usurp. (Wilson's Speech at Carlisle, England, December 29, 1918)

Paris is now filling up with all sorts of people from all the little corners of the earth, leaders of ambitious new nations, awaiting the coming of the peace conference. . . . About every second man of this type one meets, fishes out of his pocket a copy of a cablegram that he or his committee has just sent to President Wilson. It is marvelous indeed how all the world is turning to the President! The people believe he means what he says, and that he is a just man, set upon securing a sound peace. (Ray Stannard Baker, quoting from his own diary)

The Paris Peace Conference revealed the complexity of the United States' position in the world now that it was thoroughly "entangled" in the world's problems. The Americans at the Conference were at once enemies and allies and internationalists. They were at once the voice of moderation and the voice of radical reform. Even though they were internationalists, they extolled America's

exceptional status. Even though they viewed America as superior and unique, they accommodated their wartime partners. Their desire to unite the world behind common ideas competed with their desire to punish the German aggressor which, they believed, had been largely responsible for so much discordance. The Americans proved themselves to be lovers of freedom but also of order. They embraced radically new solutions to the world's problems even as they repudiated radicalism. Ours was an identity in flux.

Wilson made many mistakes at the Peace Conference and they have been often cited. Almost without exception, writers have made their own mistakes by analyzing Wilson's mistakes in terms of his personality. He was too idealistic, too theoretical, too moralistic. He was too provincial, too tied to that all-encompassing consensus in American politics regarding American values. He was too pragmatic, too weak, too inexperienced, so that he compromised too much. Robert Lansing himself described Wilson's mistakes in terms of dichotomies: between the "theoretical and practical," between "altruism and selfishness," and between "principle and expediency."<sup>1</sup>

At the Conference, Wilson was at times too theoretical and principled for his own good. However, if we examine the Peace Conference with an open mind, Wilson's mistakes seem of a more specific nature than these generalizations would imply. It is less important *why* Wilson made mistakes (for example, because he was "too theoretical") than why certain policies and ideas turned out to be mistakes. If, for example, the only thing we learn from a study of the Peace Conference is that Wilson was too "bound" to the creed of American exceptionalism, we are likely to judge current policies in terms of such generalities rather than in terms of the specific requirements and aspects of each situation. If, however, we learn that Policy A was detrimental to peace because it caused the Germans to do B or that Policy C was unjust because it allowed the Poles to do D, we have perhaps learned something valuable for the formation of American foreign policy. Let us look briefly, then, at some of the commonly acknowledged mistakes Wilson made at Paris.

There is little doubt that Wilson should have bargained with the Allies during as well as after the war. For example, as Victor Mamatey suggests, an early promise of military assistance might have convinced Italian Foreign Minister Sonnino to accept a revision of the Secret Treaty of London. By May of 1918, the American Expeditionary Force was rapidly attaining a size where it could spare troops for Italy. Public opinion and many government leaders in Italy desired an agreement which would lessen tension with the Yugoslavs by mitigating the Treaty's concessions to Italy in the Adriatic.<sup>2</sup> Wilson, however, neglected to offer the extension of American troops to Italy in exchange for a modification of Italian war aims. As Mamatey puts it, "the idea of coupling military assistance with military bargaining seems never to have occurred to the President."<sup>3</sup> Recall that, during the Neutrality Period, Wilson did not insist that the Allies modify their war aims as a condition of U.S. entrance into the war.

Wilson had a difficult time bargaining with the Allies at Versailles in part because, by that time, he had few chips with which to bargain.

It is significant that European leaders *did* accept Wilson's general principles as a basis for peace; this in itself meant that the Secret Treaties would not have the same binding power that they would have had without this agreement. Liberal and labor groups were strong in Europe during and after the war. But liberal sentiment competed with that hubristic and vengeful spirit which was the natural result of victory at the end of a painful and protracted struggle. As Ray Stannard Baker puts it, Wilson should have gotten the Allies to agree to certain specific principles and provisions before they were "flushed with victory."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to his failure to use bargaining power when he had it, Wilson is criticized for an inadequate attention to procedure. The structure of the Conference was such that the deck was stacked against the kind of world Wilson wanted to create. The first and most conspicuous procedural difficulty was that Germany was omitted from the peace discussions. Paul Johnson notes that it was at first "vaguely assumed" that preliminary terms would be drawn up by the Allies, after which the Germans and their allies would be permitted to participate in the negotiation of the actual Peace Treaty. Indeed, the French Ambassador in Washington handed Wilson a proposal along these lines on November 29, 1918.<sup>5</sup> Surprisingly, this document stipulated the immediate cancellation of all the Secret Treaties! But its wording irritated Wilson, and instead of amending the proposal, Wilson rejected it.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the Allies met at Versailles without having decided whether the negotiations were to be preliminary or final, without having decided whether the Treaty they were creating was to be negotiated with or imposed upon the Germans.<sup>7</sup> This did not bode well for the fair and just peace Wilson hoped to create. Nor did it strengthen the possibility that a reformed Germany might someday enthusiastically join a "new world order." As Johnson puts it, "when the Germans were finally allowed to come to Paris they discovered to their consternation that they were not to negotiate a peace but to have it imposed upon them, having already rendered themselves impotent by agreeing to an armistice which they now regarded as a swindle."<sup>8</sup>

The Germans indeed had good reason to view the Armistice as a "swindle." As far as they knew, the Armistice included the agreement that Wilson's principles would be used as *guiding* principles in the creation of a peace settlement. Unbeknownst to them, Colonel House and Allied leaders had agreed to a "Commentary" to which Wilson had consented, which qualified and interpreted Wilson's pronouncements in a way frequently detrimental to the Germans. For example, one of Wilson's Fourteen Points had been: "A free, open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty, the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined."<sup>9</sup> One of the points of his "Four-Minute Address" had been: "The settlement of every

question, whether of territory, of sovereignty, of economic arrangement, or of political relationship, upon the basis of the free acceptance of that settlement by the people immediately concerned, and not upon the basis of the material interest or advantage of any other nation or people which may desire a different settlement for the sake of its own exterior influence or mastery."<sup>10</sup> Although agreeing that the interests of the populations had to be considered and that claims to colonies should be made on an equitable basis, the Commentary included the following statement:

Some fear is expressed in France and England that this involves the reopening of all colonial questions. Obviously, it is not so intended. It applies clearly to those colonial claims which have been created by the war. That means German colonies and any other colonies which may come under international consideration as a result of the war. . . . The stipulation is that in the case of the German colonies the title is to be determined after the conclusion of the war by "impartial adjustment" based on certain principles. These are of two kinds: 1. Equitable; 2. the interests of the populations concerned.<sup>11</sup>

Wilson's agreement to this particular item of the Commentary is significant because it underlines the extent to which he was now willing to dismantle former world structures, in this case the entire German Empire, and to create new structures in their stead. (Once again, his anti-imperialism led him to violate his own tenet of gradualism.) Moreover, it foretold that Wilson would be more dogmatic in applying his principles to the Germans than he would be toward the English, the Italians and the French. The Commentary stipulated that the fate of the *German* colonies (not of the English, Italian and French) would be determined on the basis of "certain principle." Wilson's desire to punish the Germans and to accommodate his Allies competed with his desire to create a cohesive and progressive world order into which the Germans would eventually be integrated.

Wilson *did* have good reason to compromise then and later at the Conference. Failing to compromise would have meant a prolonged and protracted negotiation of the peace. Reports of chaos and confusion in Central Europe, Russia, the Far East and the Near East made an expeditious peace settlement necessary. Bolshevism and anarchy seemed to threaten the very fabric of European life. However, we must view as a mistake Wilson's failure to attempt a quick modification of the Commentary so that it would be more amenable to his goals. It was an even greater mistake to agree to the Commentary without informing the Germans. The Germans' belief that they had been deceived regarding the principles which would guide the peace contributed to their smoldering feelings of humiliation and resentment which, as has been said so often, fueled their later attraction to Nazism.

Wilson made other commonly cited mistakes having to do with the structure of the Conference. One of those most often noted was that of attending the Peace Conference himself. Whereas, before the Conference, he had successfully assumed the position of moral leadership in the world, his involvement in the

Conference made him just one among other negotiators haggling over the details of the peace. As Ray Stannard Baker, who was at the Conference, observed: "At the time of the Armistice Wilson was what might be called the majority leader of (this) world public opinion. He dominated the situation, he laid down world policies. But at the Peace Conference he was the leader of the opposition, a powerful opposition but undoubtedly a minority."<sup>12</sup> Another mistake was allowing the structure of the Conference to be such that Premier Clemenceau's power was disproportionate to that of the other leaders. Wilson agreed to allow Clemenceau to preside over the Supreme War Council. When the Supreme War Council was converted to the Council of Ten, Clemenceau continued to preside.

Such commonly cited mistakes as these contributed to Wilson's inability to keep the Treaty free of provisions which negated the spirit of the Fourteen Points and subsequent pronouncements. To what extent, then, was the treaty conducive to American liberal democratic goals? To what extent would postwar arrangements *reflect* American influence?

The real question at the Peace Conference was not whether a new world order would exist. The war had destroyed too much; Wilson's words had challenged too much and inspired too many for there to be a return to the status quo ante. The war had discredited lofty old political institutions and empires. Versailles had to replace those institutions and empires with *something*. The question was not whether a new world order would exist, but whether the "old order" would continue to exist alongside of the new. Insofar as the old order stood for militarism, imperialism and balance-of-power tactics, Wilson believed that the new order could not successfully coexist with the old. In a speech responding to what he believed to be excessive Italian demands, Wilson declared:

We are now engaged in setting up an international association and Italy will have a part of the leadership therein. If this does not suffice, then two orders will exist—the old and new. In the right hand will be the new order and in the left hand the old order. We cannot drive two horses at once. The people of the United States will repudiate it . . . They are disgusted with the old order. . . . The people of the whole world are tired of the old system and they will not support it.<sup>13</sup>

The fact that Wilson was unable to stop old world ideas and tactics from influencing the Treaty helps to explain the volatility of the postwar atmosphere. Not only would vestiges of the "old" order continue to exist, but *another* "new" order would compete with that of Wilsonianism. Wilsonianism was to be challenged not only by a resurgence of militarism but also by an increasingly internationalist bolshevism. In the years to come, the middle ground of Wilsonianism would encounter fresh resistance as the right fed upon fears of the left, the left upon fears of the right.

The extent to which the Old World would continue to exist alongside of the new depended partly on the extent to which Wilson would apply his principles



equally: to the Central Powers and to the Entente. It was a foregone conclusion that Wilson would be vigorous in applying his principles to the defeated and humbled Central Powers. In this sense, he was their greatest threat, for he stood for the abolition of their political methods, ideas and structures. And yet, that same incendiary liberalism which threatened the demise of the Central Powers provided their greatest hope (above). For it promised to mitigate the vengefulness of the Entente by requiring the principles of fair play, the Open Door and territorial integrity, and by requiring that those principles be applied to *any* nation which was peaceful and democratic.

Prince Max of Baden made it clear that Germany turned to Wilson for this reason. In a speech to the Reichstag on October 22, 1918, he expressed the hope that Wilson was "above" the "selfish interests" of the Entente:

Gentlemen[,] it had been held up to one from many sides that acceptance of Wilson's conditions would mean subjection to a tribunal hostile to Germany which would decide the question of right solely from the viewpoint of selfish interests. If that were the case why should the extreme right politicians of the Entente be the very ones to shun the tribunal like guilty persons? The pith of Wilson's whole program is the League of Nations; it cannot be established unless all nations rise to a height of national self-control.<sup>14</sup>

Prince Max proceeded to imply that if Germany complied with Wilson's demands by reforming its political structure and its foreign policy, it would become a viable part of the new world order. In an interview with a Dutch correspondent, he revealed his hopes that such reforms would, in addition, ensure "right and justice" in the final settlements:

What you see taking place in German Empire as well as in Confederate States is outcome of silent underground movement of many years. The war and acts of militarism and servile leaders with their political wisdom having gone shipwrecked merely strengthened in tremendous way the movement. . . . Any doubt concerning sincerity of change of system is refuted by fact it is firmly moored in Constitution. In this conviction, I frankly acknowledge assistance given to democratic idea by President Wilson who reiterated solemn declarations to effect that a truly democratic German Government can absolutely depend on right and justice in final settlements has essentially fortified position of Germany's democratic leaders. New government has therefore seen fit to acquaint Wilson with change in German Constitution by memorandum transmitted to Swiss Charge d'Affaires at Washington.<sup>15</sup>

In spite of Prince Max's assurances to Wilson and his own people, a peaceful "revolution" ensued in Germany, due to the belief that those reforms instituted by Prince Max were neither sufficient for democracy nor sufficient to satisfy President Wilson (above). The new Chancellor, Ebert, implied in an interview with a representative of the Dutch News Agency that Wilson's demands had been "satisfied":

This revolution has been prepared for a long time in Germany, since war's beginning, and would probably have broken forth immediately no matter what peace concluded; but now even the most skeptical must recognize that the day of monarchy and imperialism in Germany has finally passed. All who have fought us from apprehensions or hatred of that power must now be completely satisfied.<sup>16</sup>

Implicit in these interviews was the belief that Wilson would treat those countries which became democratic and which abstained from aggression with generosity and magnanimity. Also implicit was the belief that those countries would be *included* in the new world order. In addition to his Armistice Messages, which had implied precisely that, Wilson had defined the wartime divisions of the world in terms of the opposition between autocracy, militarism, imperialism and extremism—and democracy, self-determination, fair play and moderation. It followed that what was necessary for a divided world to become united was for the autocrats and imperialists to become democrats with fair and equitable foreign policies. Indeed, Wilson described the new world order in terms of a *consensus* regarding political structures and values. He defined peace itself not in terms of the coexistence of opposites but in terms of the melding of activities and thoughts:

After all, when we are seeking peace, we are seeking nothing else than this, that men shall think the same thoughts, govern their conduct by the same ideals, entertain the same purposes, love their own people, but also love humanity, and above all else, love that great and indestructible thing which we call justice and right.<sup>17</sup>

Now, the Germans had declared themselves willing to do just that; they were willing to exhibit the *same* conduct and subscribe to the *same* principles as Wilson. By Wilson's own implicit promise, then, they could no longer be defined as the "enemy," for the enemy had been defined in terms of ideas and methods which the Germans had abandoned.

The problem for the Germans was that just as American foreign policy had become internationalist, emphasizing the unity of the United States with all other democracies, so too it had become more partisan and involved in the divisions of Europe (above). Regardless of the unified world it envisioned, the United States had become enemy and ally in an explosive world war. While the United States did envision a harmonious world, it had fostered disharmony: between the German government and the German people, between the Austro-Hungarian government and the Austro-Hungarian people, between Austria-Hungary and Germany, and between the Germans who were blamed for the war and everyone else. Even though this divisiveness arose out of the tumult of war, by its very existence it had become a part of the American identity.

The problem for Wilson lay not just in Allied opposition to American ideas but in tensions *within American ideas*. Due to the United States' affinity with the Entente and the necessity of compromising with them; due to the fact that

its union with them had been military as well as ideological; due to the commitments Wilson had made to nationalities and subject peoples which were inherently destructive of the German state; due to his desire to punish our former enemies and; yes, due to the fact that Wilson was willing to compromise with the English and French in order to get the kind of League he wanted, Wilson had neither the will nor the capacity to see to it that his principles were applied *equally* to the victors and the vanquished.

As N. Gordon Leven Jr. has shown, Wilson himself had competing desires: to establish a moderate peace reintegrating Germany into the international structure and to punish the German militarists to the extent warranted by their transgressions.<sup>18</sup> But Wilson's ambivalent approach to Germany was no mere psychological phenomenon; it was grounded in the entire history of America's participation in the war. Thus, the Germans, who placed their hopes in that side of Wilsonianism which emphasized unity through the proliferation of democracy, were destined to be disappointed. Wilson did not even fight to guarantee their entrance into the League at an early date. Sondra Herman notes that Wilson's punitive approach to Germany "cost Wilson the support of the European social-democrats, but in any case the Left underestimated the degree to which the antirevolutionary Wilson was willing to accommodate to the Allies."<sup>19</sup> The Germans made that same underestimation.

Even Wilson's advocacy of a League of Nations contained certain disadvantages for the Germans. Wilson believed the League would help the United States to preserve stability while gradually effusing political change. It would unite the world behind American-inspired liberal values while preventing and punishing aggression. Ironically, Wilson's desire to create a moderate peace competed with his desire to create a League which *in itself* would embody moderation. His determination to get the Allies to accept an American-inspired League led him to make compromises at Versailles which did not bode well for moderation, and which he might not otherwise have made. He was willing to accept some of the extreme goals of the Allies in return for their acceptance of a League which, he hoped, would correct those extremes.

Partly because of Wilson's willingness to compromise, hopes based on the righteousness of Wilson's principles would lead to extreme disillusionment. In Hungary and German-Austria as well as in Germany, the promise inherent in those principles was itself compromised. Again, Wilson's principles encountered a problem of application in areas where the enemy no longer fit Wilson's description of the enemy. As with Germany, Wilson had eventually justified our "enemy status" with Austria-Hungary on the basis of its autocratic political system and its imperialistic foreign policy. He had defined the United States as a friend and defender of those countries which, unlike Austria-Hungary, were fair and democratic. Wilson's dilemma was that he had been so convincing regarding the rewards and benefits of democratization that he could not, with constancy and good faith, punish former enemies who had followed his advice and based political reforms on his principles.

Doing just that on November 16, 1918, the Hungarian National Council proclaimed Hungary a republic. Karolyi, the new leader, turned to Wilson for support, appealing to him to "come to the assistance of the young Hungarian democracy."<sup>20</sup> The new Hungarian government made the mistake of refusing to recognize the Austrian Armistice of November 3 (now considering itself a distinct polity), and instead entered into direct negotiations with the Allied South-eastern Commander, General Franchet d'Esperey. Esperey, ascribing to the French view that maximum punishment of aggressors was desirable, dictated to Karolyi the "Military Convention Regulating the Condition under which the Armistice, signed between the Allies and Austria-Hungary, is to be Applied in Hungary."<sup>21</sup> This "Belgrade Armistice" imposed harsh terms on Hungary, terms which placed it under Allied control and ensured its dismemberment. Wilson did nothing to help the Hungarians, instead allowing French opinion to prevail. In the case of Hungary, the principles of unity and fair-dealing were superseded by our newfound partisanship; our Allies were permitted to crush our former enemy.

Disillusioned with Wilsonianism and with democracy itself, the Hungarians turned to bolshevism under the Russian-oriented leader Bela-Kun. Wilson's view that bolshevism was a symptom of wrongdoing seemed, in this case, to be borne out. The irony was that Wilson had acquiesced in the wrongdoing.

Like the Hungarians, the German-Austrians mended their ways and placed their hopes in receiving a fair deal from Wilson. On November 12, the German-Austrian National Assembly proclaimed a provisional constitution providing for a republican form of government and for assimilation with the new German Republic. They based their right to do so on Wilson's own principle of self-determination for nationalities (which, as has been argued here, can be detrimental to the self-determination of nations). The German-Austrian Government appealed to Wilson: "You, Mr. President, have championed the right of the Poles, Italians, and Yugoslavs to unite with their national states outside Austria. We are convinced that you will also concede the same right to the German people of Austria."<sup>22</sup> Again, however, America's newfound internationalism was superseded by its newfound partisanship. Wilson and the State Department deferred to the Paris Peace Conference where, on the insistence of France, Italy and Czechoslovakia, German Austria was denied the status of a Successor State (or a new state created out of the demise of the old one) and the right to *Anschluss*, and was classified as an "enemy country" that had to endure appropriate punishment.

The Versailles Treaty as a whole was characterized by a compromising of America's former promises. Many of its imperfections are better described as compromises than as "mistakes." Let us look at specific compromises which Wilson made with the French. Wilson saw that the French were guided by "panic fear" of Germany.<sup>23</sup> He was unwilling to accept their program for the economic crippling of Germany, for the permanent military control of German industry, and for the permanent French occupation of German lands. But he saw

the need to alleviate French fears, and to make certain concessions with them in order that they would make concessions to him. The result was a compromise pure and simple.

Clemenceau demanded huge reparations for damages caused by the Germans. When the Germans had agreed to an armistice, they had understood that they would not be charged for war costs, only damages. But Allied leaders persuaded Wilson to repudiate his earlier stance and to support Allied pensions. Unable to agree upon an exact amount, the Peace Commissioners referred the exact sum to a later Reparations Commission. Wilson's tendency to refer disputes to a later "commission" for resolution *was*, perhaps, a mistake. The Commission would virtually double the reparation bill, giving the Germans another reason to claim that they had been betrayed.

Although prevailing on the reparations issue, the French were unable to achieve their idea of a League of Nations with a strong, centralized organization with powerful military forces at its disposal (in effect, a military alliance against Germany). They *were* able to get Wilson to agree to the strong and direct guarantees against aggression in Article X (below). They were not able to create a buffer state in the Rhineland, but Wilson *did* agree that they could occupy the Rhineland for fifteen years. They did not get permanent control of the coal of the Saar, but it *was* agreed that the League of Nations would administer the Saar Valley for fifteen years at the end of which Saarlanders might, by a plebiscite, determine their own fate. In addition, Wilson and Lloyd George signed the Security Treaty of 1919, which provided France with armed assistance in the event of another unprovoked attack by Germany. Ominously, the Senate rejected this Treaty, which meant that France as well as Germany felt "betrayed" by the United States.

As with France, negotiations with Italy were characterized by compromise. Italy had entered the war in 1915 only after being promised desirable enemy territory in the Secret Treaty of London. Once at the Conference, the Italians put forth an additional demand for Fiume, which had been promised to the Yugoslavs as their only outlet to the sea. Wilson listened to his "experts" who, on the basis of strategic, political and ethnographic considerations, had arrived at what they considered to be a fair division of territory between Italy, Yugoslavia and Austria. As Ray Stannard Baker's account implies, Wilson's debate with the Italians reveals the extent to which his own principles could be turned against him because certain principles contained the potential of contradicting certain others. In arguing for an Italian line in Istria, Orlando argued that it was a natural frontier, in spite of ethnography. He argued for Fiume on the basis of self-determination in spite of geography. His claims for Dalmatia were made on strategic grounds.<sup>24</sup> Wilson had indeed instructed his team to find facts concerning the strategic, ethnic and political claims of nations and nationalities.<sup>25</sup>

Wilson's reliance on expert assessments of the facts leads to another point about the Conference. When it came to territorial disputes, it was the so-called "American idealists" who sought out all the facts, and the so-called European

“realists” who chose to ignore certain facts for others. As Baker, who was there, describes it:

As the United States of America were not bound by any of the (secret) treaties in question they were quite ready to approve a settlement on a basis of facts. . . . The old order wanted possession, not facts. It would let in at once inquiries, not of what they, the great Powers, wanted for themselves in oil, silver, copper, pipe lines, but not what the people who inhabited all these vast regions of whom nobody was thinking, what they wanted, and how their true welfare was to be secured. Facts means all sorts of embarrassing inquiries into oil supply, control of railroads, domination of ports and sea-channels, armament of natives, fortifications, even customs duties and finances.<sup>26</sup>

Wilson realized that the needs and desires of the awakened peoples of the world had to be considered in order for there to be lasting peace. Early in the Conference he argued:

Gentlemen, the select classes of mankind are no longer the governors of mankind. The fortunes of mankind are now in the hands of the plain people of the whole world. Satisfy them and you have justified their confidence not only, but established peace. Fail to satisfy them and no arrangement that you can make could either set up or steady the peace of the world.<sup>27</sup>

But Wilson did not consider territorial questions on the basis of the peoples' wishes alone. Strategic, political, ethnographic and historical considerations all played a part. The U.S. Commission came to the Peace Conference with more information regarding these considerations than any of the others.

It was finally agreed that all boundaries which could not be fixed at Versailles should be determined in the future by some authority such as the League of Nations. Thus, in the cases of both Italy and France, the “old” and the “new” would continue to exist side by side. The Treaty was presented to Austria without Italian claims to Austrian territory having been solved.

Compromises were made, too, in regard to the issue of colonialism, about which Wilson felt so strongly. Wilson wanted an American-inspired League of Nations to be agreed upon *before* colonial issues were discussed, so that the one would guide the other. But the Allies, referring the League to a “commission,” cleared the way for early discussion among the Big Four regarding colonial claims. Now it was up to Wilson to prevent the colonies of the defeated powers from being simply parceled out to the victorious powers. In the Secret Treaties, the Entente powers had, of course, agreed to do just that. On January 28, 1919, Wilson warned: “The world would say that the Great Powers first portioned out the helpless parts of the world, and then formed a League of Nations. The crude fact would be that each of these parts of the world had been assigned to one of the Central Powers.”<sup>28</sup>

Wilson argued for mandates and trusteeship of the former colonies of the Central Powers. This meant the inhabitants would be administered and territories

developed with the interests of the native populations in mind. Unlike the case of the nationalities in Eastern Europe, in this case, Wilson tempered the principle of self-determination with the tenet of gradualism: The trustees were to be member nations given a mandate by the League of Nations to administer a colony until the inhabitants were ready for independent statehood. Wilson's moral position on the colonies was combined with practicality in another way—he felt that the direct annexation of vast colonial territories in Africa, Asia and the Pacific was not only unjust; it was a potential cause for another war.

Wilson insisted upon and got acceptance of the general plan for mandates and trusteeships of former colonies. He did, however, compromise regarding the specifics of that plan. He finally accepted a British plan which, although generous in regard to territories England did not covet, minimized the restrictions on British rule in Southwest Africa and the Pacific Islands. England was permitted to administer its "territories" "under the laws of the mandatory State as integral portions thereof," the only qualification being that they do so "in the interests of the indigenous population."<sup>29</sup> Still, if we remember what a huge effect Wilson's ideas had upon Europe during the war, we must see his ability to gain acceptance for the *ideas* of mandates and trusteeships, which implied that imperialism was wrong, as a significant accomplishment.

Wilson's response to the postwar proposals of the former Central Powers and of the Allied powers has been discussed. Compromises were made with the Allies, while the Germans, German-Austrians and Hungarians were branded as enemies in spite of their reforms. It remains to discuss his approach to the new successor states.

The collapse of traditional authority and of traditional political structures in Germany and Austria-Hungary created an environment of anarchy, which threatened to explode into extremes of the left and right. The collapse of the Habsburg Empire and the withdrawal of German armies from the Russian Empire left a power vacuum in East Central Europe, resulting in a chaotic power struggle among the successor states. Having encouraged and inspired revolution in these areas, Wilson was to some degree responsible for seeing to it that the revolutions did not go too far. In addition to promising a multitude of blessings to democratic states, Wilson's principles contained the promise of a more moderate and harmonious world. While keeping the former promise would have required more liberality toward our former enemies, keeping the latter promise would have required more supervision and disciplining of the successor states.

One way through which Wilson might have fostered order and calm might have been to advocate and supervise some sort of federation of successor states. United, these states would have created a strong political, cultural and economic unit; divided, they were inevitably weak and poor, which meant that they would continually vie against each other for territory and human and material resources. As Victor S. Mamatey shows, Wilson had hoped that the destruction of Austria would not result in the complete severance of ties among her peoples. As evi-

dence, Mamatey cites Wilson's "keen interest" in the aims of the Mid-European Democratic Union and the League of Nations' explicit recognition of "regional understandings like the Monroe Doctrine" and its implicit encouragement of new ones. Mamatey explains Wilson's inactivity in defense of this idea on the grounds of his belief in the principle of self-determination:

The President, however, was also a believer in self-determination. If a Central European Federation were to be created, the initiative would have to come from the peoples of East Central Europe themselves. Had they taken it, he would have most certainly given the project his warmest support.<sup>30</sup>

Wilson's belief in self-determination seems, however, an insufficient explanation for his inaction; that principle had never prevented him from using his leverage to promote his ends before, nor had it stopped him from using the strength and influence of the United States to persuade others. A more likely explanation is that, in spite of his internationalism, Wilson realized that his country only had the will and the capacity to extend its energy and its resources so far. Wilson *did* make suggestions for a League for the supervision of the successor states, but he did not go to the limit by making order and cohesion in East Central Europe a primary objective of American foreign policy.

Immediately upon the war's end, that expansiveness which had characterized the mission of the United States during the war began to diminish. Although caring about the fate of the peoples in East Central Europe fit the internationalist creed, the extent of that caring had been triggered by the desire to win the war (above). Wilson himself realized that our mission had to have flexibility in order to thrive. If it meant the actual exertion of American influence and power everywhere and every time that influence and power had the potential to do good, it would expend itself and, in overburdening the American people, lose its appeal.

Another reason for Wilson's reticence in regard to the chaos in East Central Europe was the fear that intervention would only alienate the Central European populace. Again, Wilson saw good deeds and moral suasion as the best means to influence those who had thrown off the shackles of oppression and were searching for an alternative. Again, mission and power were intertwined, our power being enhanced by our mission. On November 5, 1918, Wilson did appeal to the nationalities for moderation. Exercising his powers of persuasion, he asked that:

Both the leaders and the people of the countries recently set free shall see to it that the momentous changes now being brought about are carried through with order, with moderation, and mercy as well as firmness, and that violence and cruelty of every kind are checked and prevented, so that nothing inhumane may stain the annals of the new age of achievement.

They knew, he said: "That such things would only delay the great things we are striving for, and they therefore confidently appeal to you to restrain every



force that may threaten either to delay or to discredit the noble processes of liberty.”<sup>31</sup>

Wilson drew a sharp distinction between moral persuasion and physical force when it came to the Bolsheviks and to the liberated peoples of East Central Europe. The fact that he did not make that same sharp distinction when dealing with anti-revolutionary dictatorships in Latin America or with the German autocracy shows clearly that the emphasis of such writers as Sondra Herman is wrong when they describe Wilson as “anti-revolutionary.” With the reformed governments of Germany and Austria-Hungary, he was unsympathetic. With the nationalities and with the Bolsheviks, he was indulgent. As an example: The Supreme War Council, fearing an outbreak of revolution and the spread of Bolshevik influence in East Central Europe, considered policing the lands of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, but Wilson adamantly opposed the proposal.<sup>32</sup> On November 11, 1918, he declared to Congress:

The present and all that it holds belongs to the nations and the peoples who preserve their self-control and the orderly processes of their governments; the future to those who prove themselves the true friends of mankind. To conquer with arms is to make only a temporary conquest; to conquer the world by earning its esteem is to make a permanent conquest.<sup>33</sup>

In England, on December 27, Wilson reiterated that “Any influence that the American people have over the affairs of the world is measured by their sympathy with the aspirations of free men everywhere.”<sup>34</sup>

Wilson did not believe that arms provided the proper or the feasible (given the limitations of American aspirations) means for imbuing the Bolsheviks and the East European nationalities with moderation and rationality. (The activities of both groups now overlapped each other.) Conveying a view that would be restated in the Cold War, Wilson argued that the best way to mitigate revolutionary extremism was to focus on the disease which caused it. Wilson connected revolution with hunger and despair. In a cablegram to the Secretary of the Treasury on January 4, 1919, he asked that foodstuffs be sent to all parts of Europe outside of Germany. In a cablegram to the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, he expounded:

Bolshevism is steadily advancing westward, is poisoning Germany. It cannot be stopped by force; but it can be stopped by food; and all the leaders with whom I am in conference agree that concerted action in this matter is of immediate and vital importance. The money will not be spent for Germany itself, because Germany can buy its food; but it will be spent for financing the movement of food to our real friends in Poland and to the people of the liberated units of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and to our associates in the Balkans.<sup>35</sup>

Still, there can be no denying that many of Wilson's compromises and decisions at the war's end fell short of his internationalist goals.

Wilson might have had better success in creating a new world order not only if he had been more generous toward former enemies which had turned democratic and less indulgent toward ambitious successor states, but also if he had created more specific defenses against future German aggression and paid more attention to specifically European problems. For unless the League was truly to create a united world (an unlikely event given the existence of new states and new ideologies which competed for minds and resources, money and land, and given German bitterness over a peace process that "betrayed" and "humiliated" them), the geopolitical balance in Europe still had to be addressed. Specific provisions for defense against particular countries still mattered. Although the French were wrong to advocate an excessively punitive peace toward Germany, they were correct in advocating a peace which had adequate provisions for defense against Germany.

Although Wilson reluctantly accepted the Security Treaty of 1919, which provided France with armed assistance in the event of another unprovoked attack by Germany, he failed to use his persuasive powers to convince the Senate to accept the Treaty, saving those powers of persuasion for the fight over the League of Nations. But, due to its focus on universal problems and universal solutions to those problems, the League of Nations failed to address adequately the unstable situation in Europe now that Romanov Russia could no longer be expected to act as a hedge against German aggression, and now that the Habsburg Empire had disintegrated. As Hajo Holborn observes:

In general, the universal League of Nations, composed of all members of all continents, was supposed to safeguard the peace of Europe as a part of world peace. No conscious attempt was made to reconstruct a politically self-sufficient European system. Nobody could contend that a Europe similar to that of the nineteenth century could have been revived by the Paris Peace Conference, and the Conference dealt almost exclusively with the claims of nations on the one hand and with the building of a world system on the other. The common problems concerned with Europe as a whole found no discussion.<sup>36</sup>

There was no doubt that old world structures and ideas which had been dismantled and discredited during the war had to be replaced by *something*. The question was whether the League of Nations was enough. Although most writers emphasize one or the other, the Versailles Treaty suffered *both* from inadequate attention to Germany's postwar needs *and* from inadequate defenses against future German aggression.

Wilson's mistakes are noticeable largely because he promised so much. The promise inherent in the newly expansive American foreign policy threatened to

damage that very reputation which made American promises credible; wherever the United States did not fulfill its promises, it opened itself to charges of hypocrisy, and even worse, of being no better than the imperialist powers. Wilson backed his promises with the virtues of the United States; the American experiment in democracy was living proof that the world he described might come true. Traditional American trustworthiness was proof that a more honest and less suspicious world was possible. And yet, the more the United States did attain the trust of peoples everywhere, the greater would be the likelihood that the United States would prove itself untrustworthy, for it was less difficult for the United States to keep its *general* promise of fair-dealing and respect for the territorial integrity of others than to keep its recent, *more specific* promises, including self-determination for all peoples, an end to imperialism, the formation of an effective League of Nations and the preservation of peace and order in Europe.

Still, it can be argued that it is the striving to be more than we are that keeps the promise of America alive. As Machiavelli understood, it is better to aim too high and fall short of the goal than to set no high goals at all.<sup>37</sup> If Wilson had confined America's promise to that of the American founders, he may not have disillusioned the world, but neither would he have inspired it. He may not have angered certain citizens and politicians, but neither would he have prepared them for the demands of modern life. The promise of America is kept alive by presidents like Wilson who invigorate it and adapt it to suit modern times, while using it to check modernity's excesses and misconceptions.

It is wrong to think that Wilson was ineffectual. Although he did not prevent the old world politics from existing alongside of the new, he did ensure that the new would exist alongside of the old. And, he did strive to keep alive the best of the old in American politics in response to a new kind of war and new forms of extremism. Let us conclude, then, with an emphasis on his accomplishments. These accomplishments bespeak the newfound influence of American principles on world politics.

Wilson defended the Versailles Treaty less in terms of the specific "items" of it than in terms of its overall consequences for democracy. The war and its resolution, he believed, signaled the demise of autocracy and imperialism. Even if he had done so imperfectly, Wilson had helped to usher in a new age. That age was defined less by geopolitical configurations than by a new spirit of liberty and justice which was the antithesis of the spirit of oppression and force. In Milan, on January 5, 1919, Wilson declared:

At first, the struggle seemed the mere natural resistance to aggressive force, but as the consciousness of the nations grew it became more and more evident to them that they were fighting something that was more than the aggression of the Central Empires. It was the spirit of militarism, the spirit of autocracy, the spirit of force, and against that spirit rose as always in the past, the spirit of liberty and of justice.<sup>38</sup>

The war and the Peace Treaty had changed the definition of what nations could "by right" do, both to their own subjects and to others. Wilson admitted that the Treaty was "severe," but insisted that it created a new standard for international and domestic behavior:

It liberates great people who have never before been able to find the way to liberty. It ends once and for all, an old and intolerable order under which small groups of selfish men could use the peoples of the great empires to serve their own ambition for power and dominion. It associates the free Governments of the world in a permanent league. . . . It does away with the right of conquest—populations which have not yet come to political consciousness and peoples who are ready for independence but not yet quite prepared to dispense with protection and guidance—shall no more be subjected to the domination and exploitation of a stronger nation, but shall be put under the friendly direction and afforded the helpful assistance of governments which undertake to be responsible to the opinion of mankind in the execution of their task by accepting the direction of the League of Nations. It recognizes the inalienable rights of nationality; the rights of minority and the sanctity of religious belief and practice.<sup>39</sup>

Wilson had indeed been instrumental in ushering in a new spirit and a new definition of "right." It was one thing for subject peoples to crusade against militarism, imperialism and autocracy. It was another for the influential leader of a world power to designate himself the champion of those causes. By championing those causes *himself*, Wilson gave them a legitimacy and an authority which they would otherwise have lacked. Ideas that might once have been considered radical or plebeian were instead associated with the political establishment. Although the effect Wilson had in this respect cannot be measured, reason tells us that the effect was great. He had demanded that the "welfare of the people concerned" be taken into account and "the people" in lands throughout the world turned to him. He claimed that he had awakened the consciousness of peoples, and indeed he had.

An enduring characteristic of twentieth-century politics has been that the "people" are awakened and expectant. Since World War I, "the people" have been catered to, exploited, pandered to and oppressed, but they are always a dominant feature. Politicians are faced with a choice: Either "deliver the goods" to the people or develop myths and lies, seclude them from the outside world, and exert the utmost force over them. It is no longer possible to exploit the people and to ignore their aspirations with impunity. Exploitation must be accompanied by lies to disguise that exploitation and by physical force to subdue non-believers. The regimes of Hitler and Stalin were characterized by an abundance of myths and an abundance of horrific force. Wilson's own Allies at the Peace Conference felt obligated to disguise their colonialist intentions and to *justify* any aggrandizement in their own territory or power on the basis of *Wilsonian* principles. The fact that the Allies had to rationalize their designs on

former German territories indicated that old world ideas and methods were on the defensive.

Although the Mandate System as finally conceived was much less than Wilson would have hoped for, it nevertheless signaled the legitimization of the principle that the wishes and interests of the peoples themselves had to be taken into account. Wilson's American-inspired ideas exposed unjust methods for what they were. In a war which ignited a scramble for territory, Wilson had refused to participate in the scramble. Throughout, he maintained the principles of territorial integrity and government by consent.

I have argued that Wilson urged the United States to become involved in the world in order that the United States might influence the world. Wilson believed that, in the newly interconnected and dangerous world, we had either to influence or be influenced, to lead or be led. The Allied agenda in itself was not particularly virtuous. Our entrance into the war, our influence, made the war a virtuous war. In an address at Boston on February 24, 1919, Wilson said of the Europeans:

They did not see any great thing to be achieved even when the war would be won. . . . They never dreamed that it would be a Europe of settled peace and justified hope. And now those ideals have wrought this new magic that all the peoples of Europe are buoyed up and confident in the spirit of hope, because they now believe that we are at the eve of a new age in the world, when nations will understand one another; when nations will unite every moral and every physical strength to see that right shall prevail. If America were at this juncture to fail the world, what would come of it? . . . I do not mean any disrespect to any other great people when I say that America is the hope of the world.<sup>40</sup>

Wilson had described not only American participation in the war but also a fair peace as essential to maximizing our influence upon Europe and minimizing Europe's influence upon us. This was so not only because it was within the American tradition to advocate fair play, but also because an unfair peace might lead to new wars and new threats to American security which, in turn, might compel the United States to adopt precisely those militaristic (European) tendencies which it had sought to avoid. Tragically, Wilson did not and could not create a peace so fair and stable that it would prevent the United States from the likelihood of being drawn into another European war.

In Wilson's mind, the League of Nations was a way of holding onto our democratic identity and keeping the peace, peace and democracy both being dear to the American soul. It would protect America from outside aggression even as it interlaced America with the rest of the world. Without this medium for pursuing its objectives, America might one day be put on the defensive by outside forces and so forced to adapt to them. The United States might be put in a position of *reacting* to foreign events rather than helping to shape them. To those who argued that the League would entangle us in European politics, Wilson argued that, without it, we incurred even greater risk of becoming entangled in purposes and methods other than our own:

The old system was *Be ready, and we can be ready*. I have heard gentlemen say, “America can take care of herself.” Yes, she can take care of herself. Every man would have to train to arms. We would have to have a great standing army. We would have to have accumulations of military material such as Germany used to have. We would enjoy the luxury of taxes even higher than we pay now. We could accumulate our force and then our force would have to be directed by some kind of sufficiently vigorous central power. . . . Your choice is between the League of Nations and Germanism. I have told you what I mean by Germanism—taking care of yourselves, being armed and ready, having a chip on your shoulder, thinking of nothing but your own rights and never thinking of the rights of anybody else, thinking that your were put into this world to see that American might was asserted and forgetting that American might ought never to be used against the weak, ought never to be used in an unjust cause, ought never to be used for aggression; ought to be used with the heart of humanity beating behind it.<sup>41</sup>

The League as Wilson envisioned it, in addition to providing a mechanism for mediation and dialogue between nations, would prevent and punish aggression. Article X, concerning which Wilson was unwilling to compromise, forced the issue of whether, as Henry Cabot Lodge asked, the United States was ready to put its armed forces “at the disposition of other nations.” It stipulated that “The members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.”<sup>42</sup>

In pitching the League of Nations to Americans, Wilson again insisted that an essential characteristic of the American mission was its unselfishness. It was true that that mission was defined in part by what the United States did not do; for example, it did not engage in imperialism and unjust wars. Now that the United States was a world power, however, it could not hope to claim that it was unselfish on the basis alone of what it didn’t do. Now that it had the power and influence to do positive good, it had to make that claim also on the basis of what it did do. Wilson believed that the United States could do a great deal through membership in the League of Nations. Of those opposing the Treaty, he said:

I cannot understand what they are afraid of, unless it is that they know physical force and do not understand moral force. Moral force is a great deal more powerful than physical. Govern the sentiments of mankind and you govern mankind. Govern their fears, govern their hopes, determine their fortunes, get them together in concerted means, and the whole thing sways like a team. Once get them suspecting one another, once get them antagonizing one another, and society itself goes to pieces. We are trying to make a society instead of a set of barbarians out of the governments of the world.<sup>43</sup>

Worst of all, our refusal to participate would diminish and demean those hopes which we had helped to raise and those ideals we had helped to legitimize in Europe; for if we, who supposedly stood for those hopes and ideals, were

unwilling to work and sacrifice for them, it could only have an enervating effect on others who had looked to us for inspiration. Wilson spoke copiously of the esteem in which Europeans held Americans. The people of Europe believed the United States had converted the war to "the cause of human right and justice." Thanks to the leadership of the United States, they looked forward to a "new age" when "nations would understand each other" and "unite every moral fiber and physical strength to see that right shall prevail." Radically divergent from that of setting a peaceful example, our mission now included the burden of the world's well-being.

Wilson's unwillingness to compromise with the "reservationists" in the Senate in order to get ratification of the League Treaty is often cited. The reasons he gave for that unwillingness had to do with his views of our responsibility and duty toward the rest of the world. If the Treaty were amended such that the United States incurred no definite obligations, that would defeat the very purpose of the League. Entrance into the League of Nations had, he believed, to be presupposed by the notion that each world power was to some extent responsible for the safety and well-being of the other. At San Diego, on September 19, 1919, Wilson explained why he was unwilling to accept "reservations" regarding Article X. Such reservations would, he insisted, indicate that "the United States wants to disclaim any part in the responsibility which the other members of the League are assuming. I want to say with all the emphasis of which I am capable that it is unworthy of the honor of the United States."<sup>44</sup> Wilson was unwilling to accept the idea that "the United States assumes no obligation under the provisions of Article X to preserve the territorial integrity or political independence of any other country or to interfere in controversies between other nations—unless the Congress shall by act or joint resolution so declare."<sup>45</sup> This, Wilson insisted, would "create the impression that we are trying to escape our obligations."

As is often said, it was due in part to Wilson's unwillingness to compromise on this issue that the Treaty was ultimately rejected by the Senate, so that the United States officially assumed no responsibilities at all. Wilson urged his supporters to vote against the reservationist version of the Treaty so that, oddly, those who rejected any treaty at all, the irreconcilables, and those who rejected any modifications of the Treaty voted on the same side. Certain points should be made, however, in regard to this sequence of events: First, although Wilson had refused to compromise with the Senate once the Versailles Conference was over, during the Conference, he had risked his own and his country's reputation in order to get Allied agreement to qualifications which, although distasteful to him, were designed to satisfy opposition in the Senate. Those four qualifications regarding the League Covenant were (1) specific recognition of the Monroe Doctrine, (2) a provision for withdrawal of the United States from the League if it deemed such withdrawal expedient or desirable, (3) specific exclusion of domestic questions (tariffs, immigration, etc.) from the field of disputes open to

international jurisdiction and (4) stipulation that the acceptance of mandates was optional with the designated mandatory.<sup>46</sup>

Beyond these qualifications, Wilson was unwilling to go. The so-called "idealist" was unwilling to support a League which had no backbone. He believed the League would be ineffectual unless the powers were obligated to come to the defense of each other (even if he viewed that defense as primarily economic and political and only secondarily military). Once again, Wilson's internationalism was combined with a willingness to participate in the divisions of the world as never before. Even if the enemy were potential rather than actual, even if that enemy were defined in terms of the general threat of aggression rather than in terms of a list of particular aggressors, the fact is that Wilson believed the League had to include the willingness of the United States to use its moral, economic, political and even military might to defend and pressure others. Wilson's own draft of Article X had gone even further than the final version. It required that:

If hostilities should be begun or any hostile action taken against the Contracting Power by the Power not a party to this Covenant before a decision of the dispute by arbitrators or before the investigation, report, and recommendation by the Delegates in regard to the dispute, or contrary to such recommendation, the Contracting Powers shall thereupon cease all commerce and communication with that Power and shall also unite in blockading and closing the frontiers of that Power to all commerce or intercourse with any part of the world, employing jointly any force that may be necessary to accomplish that object. The Contracting Powers shall also unite in coming to the assistance of the Contracting Power against which hostile action has been taken combining their armed forces in its behalf.<sup>47</sup>

Wilson may have been naive to think that nations would stand by the League if their interest lay with the aggressor (above). Still, any naivete in Wilson's hopes for the League of Nations are better ascribed to a lack of judgment or foresight than to idealism. Wilson definitely concerned himself with the possibility of future wars.

A second point must be made in regard to the American rejection of the Treaty. Although frequently described in terms of a return to isolationism or in terms of a rejection of Wilsonian internationalism, the rejection of the Treaty had no such significance. The fact that the United States came so close to ratifying a treaty of such unprecedented intent and scope showed that a new day had dawned for the United States. A clear majority of the American people seemingly favored ratification, with perhaps minor reservations. Thirty-two state legislators and thirty-three governors officially endorsed the Treaty.<sup>48</sup> On May 1, 1919, Senator Lodge himself admitted:

What I may call the vocal classes of the community, most of the clergymen, the preachers of sermons, a large element in the teaching force of the universities, a large proportion



of the newspaper editors, and finally the men and women who were in the habit of writing and speaking for publication, although by no means thoroughly informed, were friendly to the League as it stood and were advocating it.<sup>49</sup>

Had the pro-Wilson democrats voted for the Treaty *with reservations*, the Treaty would have passed with an overwhelming majority.<sup>50</sup> After the Treaty was rejected the first time, public pressure on the Senate to ratify the Treaty was intense. Lodge considered modifying his reservations but succumbed to the pressure of Senator Borah and other determined Republicans.<sup>51</sup>

Although they had seriously considered the League proposal, many congressional Republicans were unsatisfied with Wilson's response to their concerns regarding the issue of sovereignty. Thomas J. Knock argues that a little-noticed White House dinner on February 26 was "the most revealing and decisive encounter that ever took place between the President and the League's critics."<sup>52</sup> The most heavily discussed issues were Article X and sovereignty. Wilson admitted that "[S]ome of our sovereignty would be surrendered," and conceded that the treaty "*might* force us to declare war." As Knock puts it, "Wilson's summary comment underscored the central issue: the League 'would never be carried out successfully if the objection of sovereignty was insisted upon by the Senate.'"<sup>53</sup>

Knock also throws light on the troubled relationship Wilson had with his Progressive friends by the time of the League proposal. Progressives were disgruntled over what they perceived to be inadequate civil liberties for more outspoken Progressives. Although many progressive internationalists applauded Wilson's success in drafting a covenant *before* peace terms were imposed on Germany, there were many progressive concerns regarding it: that it was too vague, that it dealt inadequately with the economic causes of war, that the disarmament provisions were too weak, that self-determination of small groups was inadequately defended against the designs of the big powers. Liberals, pacifists and socialists became unwilling to compromise regarding the specifics of a League to which they agreed in principle. The alienation of Progressives was, Knock shows, something Wilson could not afford. (Complicating matters further, conservatives and liberals vied for influence regarding postwar domestic policy, with conservatives fearing Wilson had set a socialist precedent, and with socialists bemoaning the inadequacy of the postwar plan).<sup>54</sup>

Wilson was dismayed and disheartened by the ultimate congressional rejection of the League and by the ultimately tepid support of progressive internationalists. Standing apart, Wilson had warned, would mean "an absolute reversal of all the ideals of American history!" Without the League mechanisms for arbitration and collaborative defense, the United States would have to be "physically ready for whatever comes," and *this* would require it to become militaristic to the point of violating its democratic principles. And yet, Wilson's assessment of his own legacy was not as pessimistic as it would at first appear. A close examination of his postwar speeches reveals that Wilson often defined his achievements in

terms of those ideas and trends which he had discredited and destroyed. He claimed victory in having defeated on the battlefield and at the conference table the militarism, autocracy and imperialism of the Central Powers, and in having made those things anathema to peoples all over the world.

Wilson's inability to create a fair and generous peace and, on the other hand, one which adequately prepared for future German aggression is frequently described as a failure of Wilsonianism. Wilson did not fully succeed in changing the Allies' balance-of-power approach, nor, as has been noted here, did he apply his principles equally to the Allies and the Central Powers. But those who see the Peace Conference as a failure should remember that it was in order to *defeat* the Central Powers that Wilson brought the United States to the point of war. The wartime president frequently defined the American mission in terms of opposition: "We wanted to destroy autocratic authority everywhere in the world." The United States had, certainly, helped to destroy the autocratic authority of the Habsburgs and the Prussians.

In crushing them with words as well as weapons, Wilson believed that he had helped to crush a certain "spirit." If the Allies themselves exhibited that harsh spirit toward Germany, Wilson could justify the means by the end. Of course, the danger in making exceptions to our ideals is that we might eventually forget them, becoming inured to practices which would seem unacceptable were they defined as "ends" rather than "means." Wilson, however, did not view the harsh means to resolving the peace as in themselves all wrong. Although he opposed many items in the Treaty, he believed that the Germans and their allies should suffer the consequences of their behavior. He believed it just that they and the world be taught a lesson: International crime does not pay. Thus, the Peace Treaty can justly be criticized, but it cannot rightly be said to represent a failure of Wilsonianism.

It is true that America retracted its involvement in the world after the war. Evidence of this includes the perpetuation of protective tariffs and the discontinuation of the attempt to define political outcomes in Europe. Nevertheless, the Senate's rejection of the League did not signal an American rejection of Wilson's ideas. Events and trends in the 1920s reveal a cautiously emerging worldliness. The "Washington System" in China was a direct result of Wilsonian internationalism, as were recurring disarmament talks. By the 1920s, many business leaders were committed to what Joan Hoff Wilson calls "corporate liberalism." Like Wilson, they believed that economic self-interest had to be tempered by and associated with service to humanity. Cooperation between government and business had increased during the war, and both government and business believed it was both the practical and the humanitarian obligation of the United States to take the lead in postwar construction. For example, as Secretary of Commerce, and in his early years as president, Hoover promoted the Gold Standard, the Open Door, and investments and loans abroad. Franklin Roosevelt's "Atlantic Charter" and "Bretton Woods Agreement" were designed

in part to satisfy internationalist sentiment, which was still strong when the United States entered World War II.

As Akira Iriye shows, *cultural* internationalism, which had gained momentum by the eve of World War I, flourished after the war.<sup>55</sup> With a new cosmopolitanism, American internationalists promoted intellectual communication between the United States, Europe and Asia. Educational exchanges, conferences and new organizations brought together scholars, journalists, businessmen and others from around the world. The study of non-Western cultures was promoted to the extent that some textbooks were rewritten to compensate for parochialism and nationalism. Cultural internationalists embraced our ongoing interaction with others as “the only hope for a sane world order.” They believed “that at bottom, peace and order must depend on a habit of mind on the part of individuals in all countries—a mindset that looked beyond security, legal and even business issues and was willing to link national to world interests.”<sup>56</sup>

Although the United States was not a member of the League of Nations, it was not simply detached from it. One example Iriye provides is the following: “When, in March 1922, the League invited fifty-eight prominent intellectuals to discuss the founding of a committee on intellectual cooperation, it made sure that they would come not only from Europe—including Germany—although Germany had not been allowed to join the world organization—but also from the United States, Latin America and Asia.”<sup>57</sup> U.S. participation in the Institute of Pacific Relations, established in 1925 for the exchange of ideas on Asian and Pacific issues, was another indicator of developing American involvement in the world.

As Iriye also shows, many American intellectuals saw our new openness as perfectly compatible with American principles, albeit in their newly active form: One of the more influential Americans expressing this view was Horace Kallen, who, in *Culture and Democracy*, argued that “Americanism as a social ideal could be identified with the ideal of culture, the culture of diversity and optimism. To be a citizen of the United States would then be the same in value as being a citizen of the world.”<sup>58</sup> (Unfortunately, Americans were not the only ones to associate their political creed with the “ideal of culture.” German and Japanese fascists would use the ideals of German culture and Asian culture as the excuse for expansionism.)

Clearly, the United States had not rejected internationalism for provincialism but rather was caught somewhere in between. Wilson’s legacy to the American people cannot be categorized in terms of the dichotomies of realism versus idealism, or provincialism versus internationalism, of geopolitics versus moralism or of America’s exceptionalism versus its entanglement in the world’s problems. Nor can it be categorized in terms of a consensus regarding American values. What Wilson bequeathed to his country was an identity in transition.

He left us with an America not quite willing to reinterpret Washington’s prohibition against entanglements to mean that the best way to avoid being drawn into “their” purposes was to involve them in ours—but neither quite

willing to reject that interpretation; an America not quite willing to bear the responsibilities which an “unselfish” character would require—but neither willing to abandon its image of generosity and caring; an America not quite willing to commit itself to the defense of other powers—but newly aware that dangers and aggression in other parts of the world were also dangers and threats to ourselves.

World War I challenged American ideals as they had never been challenged before. Those ideals survived the war, albeit in a modified form. We must not forget that Wilson had feared the United States would be so affected by the war that its ideas would be injured and scathed. Thanks, partly, to his undaunted determination to remind Americans of what they stood for and to update their original ideals so that they were relevant to modern times, this did not happen. Thanks, partly, to Wilson, the ideals of the Europeans did not fare so well. The balance of power, colonialism, militarism and autocracy were all on the defensive at the war’s end. The difference between Wilson and the irreconcilables was that Wilson believed, in order for American ideals to remain the “offensive” ones, America had to continue, even after the war, to use its fullest influence in the world. At a Jackson Day Celebration in Connecticut on January 8, 1920, Wilson lamented:

The world has been made safe for democracy, but democracy has not been finally vindicated. All sorts of crimes are being committed in its name, all sorts of preposterous perversions of its doctrines and practices are being attempted. . . . This, in my judgment, is to be the privilege of the democracy of the United States, to show that it can lead the way in the great social and industrial problems of our time, and lead the way to a happy, settled order of life as well as to political liberty.<sup>59</sup>

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*Part II*

HARRY TRUMAN

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## *Chapter 6*

# The Lessons of Two World Wars: Truman Emends and Enhances the Internationalist Tradition

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Today, the entire world is looking to America for enlightened leadership to peace and progress. Such a leadership requires vision, courage and tolerance. It can be provided only by a united nation deeply devoted to the highest ideals. (Address before the Joint Session of Congress, April 16, 1945)

Much has been made of the evolution of American foreign policy during Truman's first term as president. Truman's earlier foreign policy is said to be idealistic, his later realistic. His earlier foreign policy is supposed to exhibit the internationalist concerns of Woodrow Wilson, his later "power politics." His earlier foreign policy is supposed to reflect the "acquiescent approach" toward the Soviet foreign policy of Franklin D. Roosevelt, his later to reflect an intolerance of anything "Soviet." Many analysts of the Cold War divide the years from 1945 to 1949 into "periods"; for example, viewing U.S. policy toward Russia in terms of shifts from "universalism" to "firmness and patience" to "containment." We shall see that such assessments of Truman's foreign policy are partly correct. However, they belie the fundamental aspects of American foreign policy, which remained the same during these years.

First, Truman consistently and fervently sought to uphold the ideals of the United States. He became unwilling to compromise with the Soviets in part because he came to believe that that would mean the compromising of those principles which distinguished and blessed us. His harder line toward the Soviets signaled no rejection of ideals for the sake of the realities of power, but rather the belief that "deals" with the Soviets should be put off until the power configuration was such that we could make deals advantageous to our way of life.



Second, from the beginning to the end of his tenure, Truman placed himself within the internationalist tradition and described his indebtedness to Woodrow Wilson. Although Truman emended that tradition and deviated from the path Wilson laid out for him, throughout his presidency he praised and referred to Wilson more than he did any other president. He saw the United States' realization of its responsibilities in the world, which culminated in his presidency, as the partial fulfillment of Wilson's dreams. Third, in spite of changing assessments of the Soviet Union and changing rhetoric toward it, from 1945 to early 1949, Truman consistently took no concrete action to deprive Russia of its hold on Eastern Europe. Although he quickly rejected Roosevelt's belief that cooperating with the Soviet Union would lead them to cooperate with us, he maintained Roosevelt's passive stance toward the Soviet sphere of influence. Where wartime agreements had legitimized that sphere and where the Red Army had already established its authority, Truman chose to endure, although not to approve of, Soviet hegemony.

There was, from the beginning, the potential for tension between the spheres-of-influence approach to world affairs which Truman inherited from Roosevelt and the internationalist approach which he inherited from Wilson. There was, in addition, the potential for tension between Truman's constant efforts to uphold U.S. principles and his desire to avert war over the Soviet repression of Eastern Europe. Interestingly, these disparate elements point to another continuous undercurrent of Truman's foreign policy: All of Truman's foreign policy was underlain by his determination never to let what had happened during and between two world wars happen again. In the preface to his *Memoirs* Truman revealed that "In spite of the turmoil and pressure of actual events during the years I was President, the one purpose that dominated me in everything I thought and did was to prevent a third world war."<sup>1</sup>

It was thus that, as he came to equate Soviet totalitarianism with the Nazi form of totalitarianism, he became more determined to curb and limit Soviet aggression. It was thus, on the other hand, that he sought to do so in a way that minimized the likelihood of war. It was thus that he committed himself to the inseparability of democracy and its values and American foreign policy. The Nazi war had been an immoral war and Truman believed that democracy held precisely those moral precepts which were an antidote to the recent excesses of politics: toleration, the dignity and worth of each individual, man's ability to govern himself and his right to be free, the spiritual foundation of freedom and the responsibility of each person for the well-being of others. We shall see that these principles were preached by Truman over and over again.

In this way, the above-mentioned tensions were partially resolved; although Truman embraced potentially conflicting aspects of Wilson's and Roosevelt's foreign policy legacies, he perpetuated only those aspects which fit into his own worldview and goals. Although he looked to FDR and Wilson for inspiration, he also sought to learn from their mistakes; he did not simply accept the views regarding democracy and its mission which had been handed down to him.

Rather, he sought to meet new challenges by breathing new life into traditional concepts about America's role and destiny in the world. We shall see that Truman generally met this challenge with admirable statesmanship, daring leadership and moral courage.

As with Wilson, Truman's determination to fulfill his responsibility as a leader inspired him to go beyond history—but only insofar as an untried path seemed to him to contain the distinct possibility of improvement over that already tried and proven. As was the case with Wilson, Truman's extensive knowledge of history prevented him from being blindly appropriated by the presuppositions of the past while at the same time reminding him of that which is noble in it. In his *Memoirs*, he wrote:

When we are faced with a situation, we must know how to apply the lessons of history in a practical way. . . . History taught me that the leader of any country, in order to assume his responsibilities as a leader, must know the history of not only his own country but of all the other great countries, and that he must make the effort to apply this knowledge to the decisions that have to be made for the welfare of all the people.<sup>2</sup>

Having qualified both the extent to which Truman's foreign policy ideas changed and the extent to which those ideas diverged from the ideas of his predecessors, we have also acknowledged that his foreign policy was characterized by evolution and innovation. The containment strategy which was formulated in 1947 represented a progression and maturation in Truman's thinking about America's proper role in the world. That strategy did not mean that Truman had rejected his earlier ideas regarding that role but it did signal that those ideas had been modified and refined. In order to understand Truman's foreign policy properly, we must understand both the indebtedness of "containment" to earlier strategies and to traditional American ideas, *and* the ways in which that strategy marked a departure from previous American policies and a turning point in American thought. In order to develop this fullness of understanding, this chapter examines the pre-containment period (1945–1946) on three levels: (1) Truman's indebtedness to Woodrow Wilson, (2) his response to the legacy of FDR and (3) his belief in the inseparability of mission and power.

## WILSON

Many of Truman's early pronouncements were Wilsonian through and through: The idea that the United States has to face its responsibilities in the world; that indifference to the world has the connotation of evil; that selfishness befits neither American ideals nor American interests; that force is of limited use to freedom; that influence often stems from good deeds and moral suasion; that freedom is conducive to peace; that in order to understand war and radicalism we must get to its spiritual and material roots; that democracy benefits both the pocketbook and the spirit; that democracies must, however, remember

to emphasize moderation if they are to keep extremism at bay; that economic interaction is a means to harmonious relations among nations; that imperialism is wrong and self-determination right; that man has the moral and intellectual capacity to govern himself and that our foreign policy must be guided by this principle. These ideas were reiterated by Truman, just as they were by Wilson.

For Truman as well as for Wilson, America's recognition of its responsibilities in the world was concomitant with America's abidance by its principles, for the United States could not live up to its principles and at the same time ignore its responsibilities. World War II had proven what Wilson had preached: that it is not enough not to instigate war—we are still the indirect cause if we have done nothing to prevent it. After World War II, indifference to the outside world assumed a broader significance. It now had something in common with evil in the harm it could cause. The war had proven that indifference was one of the seeds from which totalitarianism could grow. In an address at Fordham University on May 11, 1946, Truman exhorted:

Intelligent Americans no longer think that merely because a man is born outside the boundaries of the United States, he is no concern of ours. They know that in such thinking lie the seeds of dictatorship and tyranny. And they know from sad experience that dictatorship and tyranny are too ruthless to stop at the borders of the United States and conveniently leave us alone. They know what World War II and the atomic bomb have taught them—that we must work and live with all our fellow men if we are to work and live at all.<sup>3</sup>

By failing to join the League of Nations after World War I, Truman believed, the United States had unfurled its indifference for all the world to see. For Truman, it was not that the League was without its flaws, but that the League would have meant steady American involvement in the problems of Europe. And, if the United States had been more involved, Truman believed, World War II might have been prevented. In an address at Baylor University on March 16, 1947, Truman remonstrated:

After the First World War, the United States proposed a League of Nations, an organization to maintain order in the world. But when our proposal was accepted and the League was established, this country failed to become a member. Can any thoughtful person fail to realize today what that mistake cost this Nation and the world?<sup>4</sup>

In a June 26, 1945 address at the Closing Session of the U.N. Conference in San Francisco, Truman emphasized the "price" we would have to pay for world peace. Our involvement in the world was essential not only for the security and well-being of others, but also for our own:

We all have to recognize—no matter how great our strength—that we must deny ourselves the license to do always as we please. No one nation, no regional group can or should expect any special privilege which harms any other nation. If any nation would

keep security for itself, it must be ready and willing to share security with all. That is the price which each nation will have to pay for world peace. Unless we are willing to pay that price, no organization for world peace can accomplish its purpose.<sup>5</sup>

As did Wilson, Truman emphasized that in this interconnected world our responsibilities were manifold, the possibilities for our leadership great. Upon receiving an honorary degree from the University of Kansas on June 28, 1945, Truman sounded just like Wilson and, indeed, attributed his ideas to Wilson and Roosevelt:

And there is one thing we must learn: It has been a most difficult task for us to learn it; and that is that it is absolutely necessary for the greatest Republic that the sun has ever shone upon to live with the world as a whole, and not by itself. . . . We must become adjusted to that situation. I am anxious to bring home to you that the world is no longer county size, no longer state-size, no longer nation-size. It is one world, as Wilkie said. It is a world in which we must all get along. . . . And it is my opinion that this great Republic ought to lead the way. My opinion is that this great Republic ought to carry out those ideals of Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt.<sup>6</sup>

For Wilson, the United States' responsibilities were something yet to be realized, something in which he urged Americans to participate. Truman, however, tended to treat those responsibilities as *facts*. After participation in two horrific world wars, no one could claim that the United States was isolated from Europe. After what the administration considered to be the "fiasco" of Munich, no one could claim that each nation was not to some extent "responsible" for the actions of others. The fact that the United States emerged from the war a strong and vital nation while Europe lay enervated and inert, and the fact that it had proven its strength and vitality by becoming the "arsenal of democracy" and by its rapid and efficient preparations for war, made the responsibilities of the United States manifest. In his January 21, 1946 State of the Union Address, Truman intoned:

The power which the United States demonstrated during the war is the fact that underlies every phase of our relations with other countries. We cannot escape the responsibility which it thrusts upon us. What we think, plan, say and do is of profound significance to the future of every corner of the world.<sup>7</sup>

In an April 6 Army Day Address, Truman added: "The United States today is a strong nation; there is none stronger. This is not a boast. It is a fact, which calls for solemn thought and due humility. It means that with such strength, we have to assume the leadership and accept responsibility."<sup>8</sup>

The question, then, was not whether we were responsible for the destinies of peoples other than ourselves, but what we would do with that responsibility and how we would define it. On December 19, 1945, Truman explained to Congress:

Whether we like it or not we must all recognize that the victory which we have won has placed upon the American people the continued burden of responsibility for world leadership. The future peace of the world will depend upon whether or not the United States shows that it is really determined to continue in its role as a leader among nations. It will depend upon whether or not the United States is willing to maintain the physical strength necessary to act as a safeguard against any future aggression. Together with the other United Nations, we must be willing to make the sacrifices necessary to protect the world from future aggressive warfare.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, in his VE Day Statement of May 8, 1946, Truman said of the victims, "They gave us not justice, but the opportunity to achieve it, not security, but the opportunity to win it, not peace but the opportunity to make it."<sup>10</sup>

From the outset, Truman sought channels through which the United States might live up to its responsibilities and attempted to define for Americans just what those responsibilities were. In doing so, he tied postwar foreign policy firmly to the internationalist tradition, and in doing so, he expounded a decidedly Wilsonian philosophy and rationale. And yet, for every similarity with Wilson that Truman exhibited he also exhibited a difference. By the time the containment strategy went into effect, the differences were as striking as the similarities, although clear evidence of Wilson's legacy remained. At first, Truman's differences with Wilsonian internationalism took the form of qualifications to that creed; only later would they take the form of questions regarding certain fundamental aspects of the creed itself. In order to explore these intrinsic similarities and subtle differences between Wilson and Truman, let us look more specifically at Truman's early ideas about America's proper role in the world.

The obvious parallel between Wilson's and Truman's notions of "responsibility" lay in the fact that Truman at first saw the U.N. as the primary channel through which the United States might fulfill its responsibilities just as Wilson had envisioned that the League of Nations would provide that primary channel. Truman in fact declared, at the Closing Session of the U.N. Conference in San Francisco, that "By this Charter, you have given reality to the idea of that great statesman from a generation ago—Woodrow Wilson."<sup>11</sup> We shall see that Truman was, at first, overly optimistic regarding the contributions the U.N. might make to world prosperity, freedom and peace and that he later tempered that optimism. But we shall also see that Truman never stopped valuing the U.N. as a medium which ensured the United States' involvement in the world. If the U.N. were the means through which Americans were willing to accept that involvement, that in itself meant a lot. Just as the "Atlantic Charter" and the "Declaration on Liberated Europe" made Roosevelt's wartime agreements palatable to Americans, so the U.N., which seemed the very embodiment of American principles, made Americans more willing to embrace a foreign policy which embraced the world. Indeed, the U.N. was overwhelmingly popular.

As were Wilson's hopes for the League of Nations, Truman's initial hopes for the U.N. were great. As Adam Ulam points out, the U.N. was projected not

only as a "useful" institution but "as an institution necessary for preserving peace in the postwar world and as an instrument for the creation of a new world where imperialism, aggressive nationalism, and restrictive tariff walls would gradually recede and where the frontiers of freedom and commercial and cultural intercourse among nations would be constantly expanded."<sup>12</sup> Ulam argues that the fact that the four principal and most powerful members of the U.N. (the United States, Great Britain, the USSR and China) had vastly different political philosophies and social structures made the possibilities for the U.N. achieving these sweeping political and social aims even more remote than they would have been for a League of Nations, where the principal members would have ascribed to more similar political notions and been accustomed to more similar ways of life. He adds, "That the U.S.S.R. could enter the United Nations and yet pursue the same policies she would pursue were she not a member did not seem to have occurred to many of the American planners."<sup>13</sup>

In a June 28, 1945, speech spelling out the purposes of the U.N., Truman exhibited the overoptimism Ulam describes. It is interesting to note, as Truman soon would, that Soviet behavior would contravene every one of the U.N. Charter goals listed by Truman. Truman said of the Charter, "It seeks to prevent future wars" and "to settle international disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the principles of justice." (The Russian stronghold on Eastern Europe made the "just settlement of disputes" there impossible; Soviet pressure on Iran, Greece and Turkey made the peaceful settlement of disputes there highly difficult.) He said, "It seeks to promote worldwide progress and better standards of living." (The Soviet stripping and exploitation of the economies of Eastern Europe achieved just the opposite.) He said, "It seeks to achieve universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all men and women without distinction as to race, language, or religion." (Many of Russia's policies, internal and external, violated this goal.) Finally, he said, "It seeks to remove the economic and social causes of international conflict and unrest."<sup>14</sup> (The Soviets would *encourage* those causes of unrest in Western Europe by endorsing strikes and by seeking the disruption and sabotaging of Western economies.)

If the political philosophy of the Soviet Union would permit it to casually violate the U.N. Charter, the United States would exhibit no such casual separation from the U.N. and its philosophy. Of course, the United States itself was not always faithful to those principles, but Truman and Americans in general tended to see U.N. principles as having a close affinity to their own. Indeed, the U.N. revived the internationalist hope that it was possible to universalize American principles. Truman expressed such hopes in an address at the closing session of the U.N. Conference on June 26, 1945. He compared the U.N. Charter to the Constitution of the United States:

The Constitution of my own country came from a Convention which—like this one—was made up of delegates with many different views. Like this Charter, our Constitution

came from a free and sometimes bitter exchange of conflicting opinions. When it was adopted, no one regarded it as a perfect document. But it grew and developed and expanded. And upon it there was built a bigger, a better, a more perfect union.<sup>15</sup>

Truman went so far as to express the hope that the U.N. document would lead to the framing of an "international bill of rights." He additionally expressed the hope that member nations, like citizens in a democracy, could be different and yet get along. Agreement on the Charter "was proof that nations, like men, can state their differences, can face them, and then can find common ground on which to stand." That, he said, "is the essence of democracy, that is the essence of keeping the peace in the future."<sup>16</sup> Truman implied that the Charter was a sort of universalized "Social Contract" which bound nations, as the Social Contract binds people in a democracy, freely to pursue their interests only insofar as they do not harm others: "We all have to recognize—no matter how great our strength—that we must deny ourselves the license to do always as we please. No one nation, no regional group can or should expect any privilege which harms any other nation."<sup>17</sup>

Although Truman clearly expressed hopes for a democratized world, he was clearly more prone than Wilson to think that the *price* for a unified world would be some form of compromise on our part. Whereas Wilson desired the universal dissemination of American principles as a prerequisite to a unified world, Truman, while exhibiting that same desire to spread American principles, recognized that unity often entails a diminution of "moral perfection" for the sake of the whole. We should not, he said, "let our search for perfection obstruct our steady progress toward international cooperation."<sup>18</sup> As Akira Iriye puts it, "Going beyond the Wilsonian formulation of a stable international order built on democratic governments, the U.S. and British leaders were developing a vision of global interdependence on the basis of shared concerns for security, welfare and decency."<sup>19</sup> (Iriye also documents the increased willingness of internationalists to accept that social and security considerations play "a more pivotal role in the new world order," so long as "cultural underpinnings" were given even to "security and peace.")

The question later would become just *how much* we should compromise for the sake of unity; for, of course, the ultimate compromise and union between different entities is to become the same. The question then becomes just how much of our original identity we are willing to forsake for the sake of unity with some other. We shall see that Truman would never be willing to compromise when he believed that it would mean a compromising of our very ideals, of our democratic way of life or of our national security interests. It was thus that as the price for compromising came to be too great, Truman would come to reject cooperation as a means of dealing with the Soviets. Foretelling this occurrence in a Navy Day Celebration on October 27, 1945, Truman insisted that we would not compromise with evil at the same time as he insisted that we had to cooperate with imperfect regimes. In other words, we would cooperate *up to a point*:

The foreign policy of the United States is based firmly on fundamental principles of righteousness and justice. In carrying out those principles we shall firmly adhere to what we believe to be right; and we shall not give our approval to any compromise with evil. But we know that we cannot attain perfection in this world overnight. . . . We must be prepared to fulfill our responsibilities as best we can, within the framework of our fundamental principles, even though we recognize that we have to operate in an imperfect world.<sup>20</sup>

Again reflecting his dual notions that the United States would have to compromise for the sake of unity and that it would only compromise up to a point, Truman said, in his 1946 State of the Union Address: "When difficulties arise among us, the United States does not propose to remove them by sacrificing its ideals or its vital interests. Neither do we propose, however, to ignore the ideals and vital interests of our friends."<sup>21</sup>

Although Truman was more prone than Wilson to recognize the limitations which a less-than-perfect world imposed upon us, he, like Wilson, believed that the power and prestige of the United States were there to be used, albeit for just ends and in a just manner. Like Wilson, he stipulated that force was only one aspect of our power, and that force was of limited use to freedom. Truman liked to point out that it was "they" who worshipped force in Europe, but it was "we" who "won" the war. According to Truman, our freedom gave us the energy, creativity, stamina and determination to win. Free men, he indicated, are not only more resourceful than men who are not free; they are also more enthusiastic about winning a war which threatens their way of life because they have more to lose:

A free people showed that it was able to defeat professional soldiers whose only moral aims were obedience and the worship of force. . . . We tell ourselves that we have emerged from this war the most powerful nation in the world—the most powerful nation, perhaps, in all history. That is true, but not in the sense some of us believe it to be true. The war has shown us that we have tremendous resources to make all the materials for war. It has shown that we have skillful workers and managers and able generals, and a brave people capable of bearing arms. The new thing—the thing we have learned now and should never forget, is this: that a society of self-governing men is more powerful, more enduring, more creative than any other kind of society, however disciplined, however centralized. We know now that the basic proposition of the worth and dignity of man is not a sentimental aspiration or a vain hope or a piece of rhetoric. It is the strongest, most creative force now present in this world.<sup>22</sup>

The victory in Europe, announced Truman, was a victory for "our way of life."

Thus, being a powerful nation meant increased responsibilities but it did not mean pursuing selfish ends through force. As did Wilson, Truman ascribed to the view that force was something to be used in a limited fashion for limited ends. Indeed, Truman's notion of responsibility included the notion of never using force unnecessarily. In his first address before the Joint Session of Congress, Truman insisted:



While these great states have a special responsibility to enforce the peace, their responsibility is based upon the obligations resting upon all states, large and small, not to use force in international relations except in defense of law. The responsibility of the great states is to serve and not to dominate the world.<sup>23</sup>

In July 20, 1945 remarks at Berlin, Truman admonished:

Let us not forget that we are fighting for peace, and for the welfare of mankind. We are not fighting for conquest. There is not one piece of territory, or one thing of a monetary nature that we want out of this war. We want peace and prosperity for the world as a whole. We want to see the time come when we can do the things in peace that we have not been able to do in war.<sup>24</sup>

As traditionally, the American mission was defined in terms of what America didn't do as well as in terms of what it did do.

If Truman opposed the unnecessary use of force, he also defended the existence of as much force as "necessary" to forestall the resurgence of a totalitarian-inspired drive for world domination. In fact, even before his dramatic buildup of the postwar defense structure, Truman incorporated force much more into the general foreign policy formulations of our government than did Wilson. Although Wilson did not hesitate to use force in pursuit of ends he considered essential (and, indeed, in Latin America, used force in a way that exceeded his own emphasis on "fairness"), Wilson's overall policy goals to some extent belied this. In his preparedness campaign, he did insist that military measures were a necessary means to the creation of a more just and harmonious world. However, Wilson never was willing to view or depict preparedness as part of the American way of life. It was thus that participation in World War I could be viewed as a deviation from American principles even though it was fought for the sake of them. Wilson viewed the League of Nations as a way of ending the country's *need* for preparedness. Although force was a useful tool in pursuit of specific foreign policy ends, force could not, for Wilson, be incorporated into the *general* foreign policy formulations of our government.

Truman, while continuing to view the unnecessary use of force as a deviation from our principles, from the start spoke of force as an essential and vital part of this country's foreign policy, insisting that peace be "built upon power, as well as upon good will and good deeds." In a December 19, 1945 message to Congress recommending the creation of a Department of National Defense, Truman stated:

The desire for peace is futile unless there is also enough strength ready and willing to enforce that desire in an emergency. Among the things that have encouraged aggression and the spread of war in the past have been the unwillingness of the United States realistically to face this fact, and her refusal to fortify her aims of peace before the forces of aggression could gather in strength.<sup>25</sup>

After the shock of Pearl Harbor, and after seeing the cruel devastation of fascist war, Americans were more receptive to this argument than ever before.

Conversely with Wilson, Truman's rhetoric about the importance of force belied his initially very limited development and or use of it. The demobilization which followed VE Day was thorough and rapid. Pressures from a conservative Republican Congress determined to curb American commitments and control American expenditures combined with clamorous demands from the American public to "bring the boys home" led to the speedy demobilization of our armed forces and to a dramatic decrease in expenditures on arms. (Expenditures on armaments remained limited until the outbreak of the Korean War. Until then, Truman was unwilling to go beyond a \$14.4 billion defense budget largely because of concern throughout government, especially in Congress, that such measures might cause inflation.) And yet, from the beginning, Truman treated the notion of military preparedness not as an unpleasant deviation from our country's principles but as something which had to be incorporated into the very philosophy of our government. Truman would accept rapid demobilization and a decrease in armaments as political necessities, but he would not accept the *idea* of it. In an April 6, 1946 Army Day Address, Truman warned:

We must remain strong because only so long as we remain strong can we ensure peace in the world. Peace has to be built on power for good. Justice and good will and good deeds are not enough. We cannot on one day proclaim our intention to prevent unjust aggression and tyranny in the world, and on the next day call for the immediate scrapping of our military might.<sup>26</sup>

If Truman allowed expenditures on arms to dwindle, he nevertheless sought to bolster the superstructure *within which* arms might be used. He at first placed less emphasis on arms themselves than on the United States' readiness to use them. In his proposals for Universal Military Training, the Selective Service Act, and the unification of the Armed Forces, and in his creation of the Policy Planning Staff and the Central Intelligence Agency, Truman showed his resolve that, from now on, preparedness would be part of the framework of American government. For example, in an October 23, 1945 address advocating Universal Military Training, preparedness was Truman's dominant rationale:

For years to come the success of our efforts for a just and lasting peace will depend upon the strength of those who are determined to maintain that peace. We intend to use all our moral influence and all our physical strength to work for that kind of peace. We can ensure such a peace only so long as we remain strong. . . . If attack should come again, there would be no time under conditions of modern war to develop that latent strength into the necessary fighting force. . . . Our geographical security is now gone—gone with the advent of the robot bomb, the rocket, aircraft carriers and modern airborne armies. . . . It is difficult at any time to know exactly what our responsibilities will require

in the way of force. We do know that if we are to have available a force when needed, the time to begin preparing is right now.<sup>27</sup>

Truman taught us that in this postwar world, where extreme political philosophies still held currency and where huge powers were still not satisfied with their power, we had to be prepared for the worst. In his *Memoirs* Truman lamented the fact that Universal Military Training (U.M.T.) was never passed by Congress. He believed it would have mitigated the extent of Soviet expansionism by compensating for the rapid demobilization with which he disagreed:

Our frenzied demobilization, in fact, grew out of our antagonism toward maintaining a large standing army. There was only one alternative, in my opinion, and that was a prepared soldier-citizenry. . . . I am morally certain that if Congress had gone into the program thoroughly in 1945, when I first recommended it, we would have had a pool of basically trained men which would have made the Soviets hesitate in their program of expansion in certain parts of the world.<sup>28</sup>

Truman's early advocacy of such a program foreshadowed the most substantial difference to emerge between Wilson and Truman. Wilson never used the term "national security" and was prone to emphasize that an exaggerated European concern for security and national interests was responsible for the war. Truman, conversely, saw *his* world war as pointing toward the need for the United States to focus on those national security issues which traditionally had been the obsession of the Europeans. Truman would build his foreign policy around a broad conception of national security—one in which he included the principles of democracy and the ultimate goals of world harmony and peace.

In spite of the importance he assigned to national security, Truman, like Wilson, admonished against a self-aggrandizing approach not only to foreign policy but to life in general. In a later interview with biographer Merle Miller, Truman would voice a sentiment he had been leaning toward all his life:

Nowadays in politics and just about everywhere else all anybody seems to be interested in is not how much he can do but how much he can get away with. And I don't like to see it. I don't know what's going to become of us if everybody starts thinking and acting that way.<sup>29</sup>

Traditional American principles of generosity and fair play, of equal rights for all nations and all men, of self-determination, freedom and justice for all—these principles, according to Truman, sustained us as individuals within a community and as a community in relationship with the rest of the world. They were the reasons we fought the war and they were part of the reason we won it. They were the basis of our postwar plans for others and for ourselves. Without these principles, we were but one power among others. With them, we were a nation and people with a particular vision and purpose which could demonstrate for all the world to see the advantages of our way of life and our peculiar dreams.

In order to have lasting influence over the hearts and minds of mankind, Truman believed, we had to do good and be good. Truman was just as articulate as Wilson in demonstrating the practical advantages to both individuals and nations of leading a virtuous (democratic) life. Truman warned, however, against treating our democratic ways as mere means to an advantage. He taught that democratic principles should guide democratic interests, and not the other way around. As did Wilson, he emphasized that whether for the actions of an individual or the actions of a nation, self-interest unguided by the right principles was a morally bereft guide. On this basis, he urged Americans to be generous toward the world's suffering millions:

As your President, I appeal to you again—and to all Americans everywhere—to prove your faith and your belief in the teachings of God by doing your share to save the starving millions in Europe, in Asia, in Africa. Share your food by eating less, and prevent millions from dying of starvation. Reduce your abundance so that others may have a crust of bread. In short, prove yourselves worthy of the liberty and dignity which we have preserved in this earth, by helping those less fortunate who have been starved by the dictators for so many long years and who still starve even in liberation.<sup>30</sup>

As did Wilson, Truman continually focused on the spiritual-philosophical underpinnings of democracy. It was those underpinnings, he believed, which tied all the different forms or manifestations of democracy together. In a March 3, 1947 address in Mexico City, Truman said:

All our peoples have a common belief which we call democracy. Democracy has a spiritual foundation because it is based upon the brotherhood of man. We believe in the dignity of the individual. We believe that the function of the state is to preserve and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. We believe that the state exists for the benefit of man, not man for the benefit of the state. Everything else that we mean by democracy arises from this fundamental conviction. We believe that each individual must have as much liberty for the conduct of his life as is compatible with the rights of others.<sup>31</sup>

Those political systems which were “democratic in more than name alone” were those which, although imperfect, paid serious homage to this creed. On April 15, 1946, Truman added regarding the meaning of democracy in different lands:

Despite our differences in language and culture, we do have in common a love of liberty, a recognition of the dignity of man, and a desire to improve the material and spiritual well-being of our citizens. . . . Certain political rights are fundamental to freedom—free speech, a free press, the right of peaceable assembly, freedom of conscience, and the right of people to choose their own form of government.<sup>32</sup>

Truman frequently connected democracy with religion, and in particular, with the Sermon on the Mount. He preached in 1947, as he would later, that “If men

and nations would but live by the precepts of the ancient prophets and the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, problems which now seem so difficult would soon disappear.” Religion and democracy both, according to Truman, rested on the idea of the dignity and worth of each person, whereas totalitarian forms of government relied precisely on the opposite: on the hope that the spirit and vitality of the individual might be made subservient to goals of the state. In an address in Columbus in March 6, 1946, Truman reflected:

We have just come through a decade in which forces of evil in various parts of the world have been lined up in a bitter fight to banish from the earth both these ideals—religion and democracy. For these forces of evil have long realized that both religion and democracy are founded on one basic principle, the worth and dignity of the individual man and woman. Dictatorship, on the other hand, by whatever name, is founded on the doctrine that the individual amounts to nothing; that the State is the only thing that counts; and that men and women and children were put on this earth solely for the purpose of serving the State.<sup>33</sup>

Truman hoped that the U.N. Charter would embody precisely those religious attitudes which democracy at its best promotes. Underlying the Charter was the concern for what is good, what is right:

We have tried to write into the Charter of the United Nations the essence of religion. The end of aggression, the maintenance of peace, the promotion of social justice and individual rights and freedoms, the substitution of reason and justice for tyranny and war, the protection of the small and weak nations—by these principles the United Nations have laid the framework of the Charter on the sound rock of religious principles. To put this belief into practice is the essential purpose of our laws.<sup>34</sup>

In an address at Fordham University on May 11, 1946, Truman warned that a mean and narrow spirit was precisely the spirit upon which dictatorship thrived. Now there was the added danger that the wrong attitude might lead to atomic war. If we valued our free and peaceful way of life, he warned, we had better remember our spiritual values:

I fear that we are too much concerned with material things to remember our real strength lies in spiritual values. I doubt whether there is in this troubled world today, when nations are divided by jealousy and suspicion, a single problem that could not be solved if approached in the spirit of the Sermon of the Mount. . . . The new age of atomic energy presses upon us. Mark that well! What may have been sufficient yesterday is not sufficient today. New and terrible urgencies, new and terrible responsibilities have been placed upon education. Ignorance and its handmaidens, prejudice, intolerance, suspicion of our fellow men, breed dictators. And they breed wars. Civilization cannot survive an atomic war.<sup>35</sup>

In his 1947 State of the Union Address, Truman insisted that our very national security rested on a strong “moral fiber.” At the same time, he indicated that

our moral fiber depended on our national security and our material well-being:

National security does not consist only of an army, a navy, and an air force. It rests on a much broader basis. It depends on a sound economy of prices and wages, on prosperous agriculture, on satisfied and productive workers, on a competitive private enterprise free from monopolistic repression, on continued industrial harmony and production, on civil liberties and human freedoms—on all the forces which create in our men a strong moral fiber and spiritual stamina.<sup>36</sup>

The spiritual and material sources of this country's strength were, in Truman's mind, as in Wilson's mind, connected. For when people were materially deprived they became desperate; they were more likely to seek panaceas in irrational and extreme (immoral) political philosophies. At the same time, if the people were corrupt, irrational or lacking in freedom they were less likely to do their best; the economy was less likely to thrive. The connection between the material and the spiritual sources of a free people's strength was made by Truman over and over again. Truman, however, emphasized a third element which Wilson did not: Without military security, the spiritual, material and political benefits of freedom were in constant jeopardy. War, we had discovered in this century, had vast social implications even when it was not fought for social causes.

War, we had also discovered, was often underlain by social problems even when it was not fought for social "causes." If Truman believed that material and spiritual well-being were interconnected sources of stability and strength, it is no wonder that he was concerned with the material and spiritual causes of war. His recognition that power does not stem from force alone was concomitant with his belief that an undue emphasis on force or the tendency to use force irrationally often stems from a deprivation or lack in the other forms of power. Germany's lack in material and spiritual forms of power seemed, to Truman, to have spurned its use of force; Germany's desire to conquer the world seemed to have stemmed partly from its spiritual and material deprivation. Desperate people embraced desperate politics. Truman held that "underneath the Nazi madness were the material distress and spiritual starvation born of poverty and despair." "These evil forces," he said, "were seized upon by evil men to launch their program of tyranny and aggression."<sup>37</sup>

Truman recognized, however, that if Germany's use of force was *inspired* by a philosophy which fed on material and spiritual problems, its military successes were *allowed* by the military situation in Europe. He reiterated that if, after World War I, Germany had been made to surrender unconditionally; if the United States had participated in the League of Nations and hence had been more vigilant regarding German ambitions; if European governments had not allowed themselves to be deceived regarding German rearmament and had not been so eager to disarm themselves, if they had recognized Germany's bid for

world domination for what it was; and, finally, if Europeans and Americans had been capable of responding to Germany's use of force with overwhelming counterforce—Germany would, of course, never have come so close to achieving its goals.

Truman attempted to render his postwar foreign policy toward Germany adequate where Wilson's had been inadequate. Truman's policies indicated his belief that the Versailles Treaty suffered *both* from an inadequate attention to Germany's material and spiritual needs *and* from inadequate defenses against future German aggression. His approach toward Germany was at once more and less forgiving than Wilson's; from the start he resolved that the peace should be neither too "hard" nor too "soft." In his *Memoirs*, he recalled:

There had been considerable discussion in this country about whether we should make a "hard" or a "soft" peace with Germany. Most of us agreed that Germany should be deprived of the capacity ever to commit aggression again, and in that sense we wanted the peace to be "hard." At the same time, we remembered that after 1919, Germany was so enfeebled that only American money made it possible to pay the reparations that had been imposed. . . . I was deeply concerned that the peace to be written should not carry within it the kind of self-defeating provisions that would enable another Hitler to rise to power. I wanted to work out a peace settlement that would be lasting.<sup>38</sup>

Truman was, then, first of all, "hard" where Wilson had been "soft." Because of Wilson's conditional surrender policy, Truman believed, military defeat hadn't been conspicuously apparent to the Germans after World War I, so that the nationalists were later able to claim that those who had surrendered had been traitors. And, because Germany had not been occupied by the victorious powers, nationalism was free to rear its ugly head. Thus, Truman advocated that Germany be called upon to unconditionally surrender and that it be occupied by the victorious powers. In his *Memoirs*, he explained:

When the armistice was signed in November 11, 1918, the German armies were still massed in formation on the Western Front, and this front lay in France and Belgium. Nowhere was there any foreign military on German soil. There had been no fighting in Germany, and even Allied bombers had inflicted nothing worse than minor damage on the country. All this was concrete—something the German people in 1918 could see for themselves. They could not see, and did not recognize, the internal disintegration that was under way in the German armies—a disintegration which, in the race of overpowering and ever-increasing Allied forces, made further German resistance futile. And, in a short time, because of the failure of the German people to recognize these facts, German nationalists were able to contend loudly that Germany had been stabbed in the back by traitors. . . . The Nazis made great capital of this betrayal myth.<sup>39</sup>

Realizing that the facade of democracy had not been enough to prevent German aggression after World War I, Truman accepted and, indeed, subscribed to the Yalta agreements regarding Allied supervision of Germany. It had been

agreed at Yalta that the forces of the United States, England and the Soviet Union should each occupy a separate zone of Germany, and that France might also have a zone provided it were made available from the British and American zones. It was further agreed that coordination and control should be exercised through a Central Control Commission composed of the three (or four) supreme commanders of the occupying powers with headquarters in Berlin. It was stated that the Allied powers occupied Germany for this purpose: "to destroy Nazism and militarism, to ensure that Germany would never again disturb the peace of the world, to disarm and disband Germany's armed forces, to break up the General Staff, to remove or destroy all war equipment, to eliminate or control industry having war potential, to punish criminals, to exact reparations in kind for the destruction wrought by the Germans, to wipe out the Nazi party, laws and institutions, and to remove Nazis and militaristic influences from public office and from cultural and economic life."<sup>40</sup>

Truman placed the arrangements made with the occupying powers in the service of Wilsonian goals. In an August 2, 1945 Joint Report with Allied Leaders on the Potsdam Conference, Truman indicated that Nazi laws were to be abolished, Nazi war criminals tried, and German education to be "so controlled as completely to eliminate nazi and militarist doctrines and to make possible the successful development of democratic ideas." The judicial system was to be "organized in accordance with the principles of democracy, of justice under law, and of equal rights for all citizens without regard to race, nationality or religion." The political system was to be decentralized "so that power would never again be corrupted so easily."<sup>41</sup> These goals now had a real chance of success because the elements of control and supervision which had been largely absent after World War I were ever-present after World War II.

Although the Truman administration would eventually back away from its punitive approach for the sake of reviving the German economy and creating a viable West German state, Truman never backed away from his belief that Germany had to be thoroughly supervised until democracy was not a mere superstructure imposed *on* the Germans but an entrenched pattern and a way of life. Truman adhered to one of the goals enunciated by the Allied powers at Potsdam which was "to prepare for the eventual reconstruction of German political life on a democratic basis and for eventual peaceful cooperation in international life by Germany."<sup>42</sup> It was in part that desire to democratize Germany which compelled Truman, even before the open rift with the Soviet Union, to reject a peace which was "too hard" just as he had rejected one that was "too soft." He knew that the Germans would never accept democracy unless its advantages were manifest to them.

The problem was this: Were "democracy" only a superstructure imposed upon the Germans, its benefits would not be apparent. Conversely, were its benefits not apparent, the people had no reason to accept the superstructure of democracy. Thus, placing as much emphasis on creating a polity which the Germany people could believe in as on destroying Nazism and the people's faith in it,



Truman insisted that we help our former enemies to recover both politically and financially. For example, *from the beginning*, he refused to agree to crippling reparations which would impose further hardships on the German people. In an April, 13, 1945 report prepared for Truman, Stettinius argued: "Political stability and the maintenance of democratic governments which can withstand the pressures of extremist groups depend on the restoration of a minimum of economic stability. To do our part we must carefully analyze the needs and reserves of all claimants, military and civilian, domestic and foreign, and insist that they be reduced to absolute essentials" (*Memoirs*).<sup>43</sup> Truman concurred. After all, Truman believed, it was the American tradition to be magnanimous in victory and to use victory as an opportunity to improve rather than to diminish the lives of others. He recalled:

We did everything humanly possible to prevent starvation, disease and suffering. We provided substantial aid to help restore transportation and communications, and we helped rebuild cracked economic systems in one major country after another. . . . We had won the war. It was my hope now that the people of Germany and Japan could be rehabilitated under the occupation. The United States, as I had stated at Berlin, wanted no territory, no reparations. Peace and happiness for all countries were the goals toward which we would work and for which we had fought. No nation in the history of the world had taken such a position in complete victory. No nation with the military power of the United States of America had been so generous to its enemies and so helpful to its friends. Maybe the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount could be put into effect.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, along with the negative steps of demilitarization and denazification, the United States worked, from the beginning, to rebuild and revive the demoralized and defeated country. It worked to educate Germans so that not only would their material lives be improved, but their spiritual and intellectual lives as well. If material and spiritual depravity had contributed to German Nazism, then it was important to imbue the Germans with the right values while impressing upon them the dignity and worth of each human life. Punishment of and help for the German people were to go hand in hand, for both served the purposes of improving the German political outlook. Truman was keenly aware, however, that, if the United States were overzealous in its attempt to reform Germany, the means might belittle the end. He knew, for example, that Germans would learn more about democracy if the United States set a positive example and provided an "enlightened" education than if it engaged in activities such as destroying books and creating unduly restrictive labor laws; these were none other than the methods of the Nazis themselves. In a February 25, 1946 letter to the Political Adviser for Germany, Secretary of State Byrnes expressed this view:

Dept. is concerned lest a program for suppression of allegedly noxious printed material lead to grave abuses reminiscent of Nazi book burnings and similar acts of violence to the intellect. . . . While recognizing need for carefully weighted measures to prevent lit-

erary campaigns for revival of National Socialism and militarism, Dept. is persuaded that fundamental change of German outlook must come from positive program of democratic teaching and democratic example rather than from attempting to suppress the extended categories of materials described in the materials described in the information control paper.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to being morally correct, then, fair treatment of the vanquished was considered to be to our practical advantage. As Wilson had realized, part of our strength lay in our appeal and part of our appeal lay in our reputation. On December 6, 1946, the Acting Secretary of State instructed the Chargé in the Office of the U.S. Political Adviser for Germany to advise against the British proposal for compulsory labor transfers within Germany on these grounds, grounds which echoed Truman's exposition of American principles.

Lineup on this issue in Berlin vis-à-vis other allied reps. with attendant repercussions in Germany, make approval of British proposal or compulsory transfers highly inadvisable. . . . Despite critical unjustifiable. . . . U.S. should consistently oppose compulsory transfers on principle. . . . From practical angle persons transferred to mining on compulsory basis less likely prove productive workers than voluntary workers. In any case compulsory transfers hardly likely improve productivity of workers.<sup>46</sup>

Again, freedom was seen as a *motivating* force.

Truman's immediate postwar policy toward Germany, his refusal to treat Germans too harshly or too softly, was underlain by the gravity with which he accepted America's new responsibilities. He insisted that the United States had to face its responsibilities in Germany responsibly, ever aware of the importance of its position and the seriousness of its endeavor. On April 6, 1946, he admonished: "Victorious nations cannot, in the surrender of a vicious and dangerous enemy, turn their backs and go home. . . . Tyranny must be rooted out from the very soil of the enemy nation before we can say that the war is really won."<sup>47</sup> Thus, in Germany and other occupied areas such as Japan, Truman exhibited a thoroughness and attentiveness to details which Wilson often lacked. Although Wilson placed great pressure on Germany to democratize as a *pre-requisite* to peace, he gave too little thought to Germany's postwar needs and to the configuration of power which would be necessary if Europe were to prevent another German-inspired war.

Truman and Wilson both, of course, had great faith in the benefits democracy could bring to a region and its people. In an address before the Governing Board of the Pan American Union on April 15, 1946, Truman revealed this faith:

The danger of war will never be completely wiped out until the economic ills which constitute the roots of war are eliminated. To do that we must achieve the kind of life—material, cultural and spiritual—to which the peoples of this world are entitled. To that objective we must all dedicate our energies and our resources. . . . I know of no one word

which more fully embodies this objective than the word "democracy". . . . Democracy is the rallying cry today for free men everywhere in their struggle for a better way of life.<sup>48</sup>

In spite of his Wilsonian emphasis on the "material, cultural and spiritual" benefits of democracy, and in spite of his insistence on democratizing Germany more thoroughly than Wilson himself, Truman had less faith than did Wilson that democratization in and of itself could solve the social causes of extremism and unrest. Having lived through the Depression and having been a supporter of Roosevelt's solutions to that problem, Truman embraced the notion that democracy might not be enough to create an economically stable, morally strong and peaceful world. Even where democracy was firmly entrenched, it did not always satisfy the people's needs. And, Truman went further than Wilson in viewing the fulfillment of basic needs as a necessary concern of politics. In this modern world, where peoples everywhere were awakened and expectant, the satisfaction of people's minimal needs was, he believed, essential for stability and peace. As the clamorous and demanding voices of newly liberated former colonial peoples and of newly "politicized" members of the European lower classes raised their volume, and as communism, now strengthened by the Soviet Union's wartime successes, claimed that it could fulfill those demands where democracy could not, "need" became a larger foreign policy issue. More so than did Wilson, Truman saw U.S. attention to this issue as requisite for domestic tranquility, international peace, and the avoidance of political extremes such as communism, which offered panaceas to the needy and expectant.

It was thus that Truman envisioned a somewhat more active role for the state than did Wilson. He repeatedly emphasized the "four freedoms": of speech, of religion, from want and from fear. Whereas Wilson's primary emphasis when speaking of freedom was on the individual's right to pursue his or her dreams so long as he or she did not harm others, Truman, while still emphasizing this kind of freedom, defined freedom in terms of having as well as pursuing. To be free to pursue their ambition, he implied, people had to "have" something to eat and somewhere to live. Although he backed away from Roosevelt's emphasis on a welfare state, his "Fair Deal" went further than Wilson's "New Freedom" regarding the economic well-being of citizens as a primary concern of government.

Like Wilson, Truman had an internationalist framework for the world economy. He favored the increasingly free exchange of services and goods, investment abroad, cooperation among states and the undoing of nationalist barriers to free economic competition. Whereas Wilson viewed economic cooperation and interaction as in themselves contributing to peace, Truman felt that a stable peace would depend upon more attention being paid to the economic well-being of each individual. Although he believed that a free and fluid world economy would contribute to a good standard of living and hence to a stable international environment, he did not believe that economic interaction between states would be sufficient. Long before he introduced his "Point Four" proposal, Truman

emphasized the importance of development. Neither democratization nor free trade would in and of themselves lead to development. Rather, development was essential for free trade and the survival of democracy. The "roots" of democracy, Truman warned on April 6, 1946:

will not draw much nourishment in any nation from a soil of poverty and economic distress. It is a part of our strategy of peace, therefore, to assist in the rehabilitation and development of the Far Eastern countries. We seek to encourage a quick revival of economic activity and international trade in the Far East. To do that we stand ready to extend credits and technical assistance to help build the peace.<sup>49</sup>

Regarding the Near and Middle East, Truman insisted that

if peace is to be preserved and strengthened in this part of the world . . . we cannot be content merely to assure self-government and independence. The people of the Near and Middle East want to develop their resources, widen their educational opportunities and raise their standards of living. The United States will do its part in helping to bring this about.<sup>50</sup>

Turning to Europe, Truman said:

We find her suffering from terrible pangs of hunger and privation. Economic reconstruction is first of all a task for the people and the governments of Europe. Help from the outside, however, will quicken the pace of reconstruction and reduce the cost in human misery. The United States is in a position to help; we are helping now; and we shall continue to help.<sup>51</sup>

As did Wilson when he appealed to Americans regarding his policy proposals, Truman appealed simultaneously to America's conscience and to its self-interest in asking for funds for aid and development to foreign lands. As so many times in the dialectic of American thought, the right thing was understood to be the prudent thing. Truman asserted:

We shall help because we know that we ourselves cannot enjoy economic prosperity in a world of economic stagnation. And we shall help because economic distress, anywhere in the world, is a fertile breeding ground for violent political upheaval. And we shall help because we feel it is right to lend a hand to our friends and allies who are recovering from wounds inflicted by our common enemy.<sup>52</sup>

In support of development and reconstruction Truman at first advocated grants and loans to the most needy nations, and active U.S. support of U.N. institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Monetary Fund and the Export-Import Bank. In spite of the limited funds at his disposal and in spite of his early termination of Lend-Lease, from the outset, Truman saw the development

and modernization concerns of other nations as concerns of our own—as logical responsibilities of the most developed and modern nation in the world. Truman recalled in his *Memoirs*:

Something would have to be done to cushion the shock of reconstruction, but I did not consider this to be a proper function for Lend-Lease. I knew that if we undertook to use any Lend-Lease money for rehabilitation purposes we would open ourselves to congressional criticism. However, the critical problem that our allies were facing was still with us, and we had to find a way to meet it. The reconstruction of Europe was a matter that directly concerned us, and we could not turn our back on it without jeopardizing our own national interests. It seemed to me that the proper way to accomplish this was through the Export-Import Bank, and, so far as possible, through the International Bank.<sup>53</sup>

As Soviet aggression grew, however, Truman's support of these U.N. agencies, which often benefited left-leaning governments, would diminish. The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan and Point Four would be designed so that the United States had control over the where and how of its expenditure of funds.

The issue of control would become increasingly important. Truman, like Wilson, espoused the traditional principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other sovereign nations even as he embraced the new idea that interfering was frequently necessary for the preservation of peace and freedom. World War II had proven what Wilson had preached: that not only was there a connection between spiritual and material problems and repressive and bellicose governments, but also that there was a connection between internal philosophies of government and the external behavior of states. The fascist philosophy had undeniably contributed to the German, Italian and Japanese provocations of war. Having felt the convulsions of totalitarian wars, Truman naturally made the connection between government based on the principle of consent and individual rights and a rational and decent foreign policy. In a 1947 Independence Day Address, he declared:

The first requisite of peace among nations is common adherence to the principle that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. . . . The stronger the voice of a people in the formulation of national policies, the less the danger of aggression. When all governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, there will be enduring peace. A second requisite of peace among nations is common respect for basic human rights. . . . As long as the basic rights of men are denied in any substantial portion of the earth, men everywhere must live in fear of their own rights and their own security.<sup>54</sup>

Truman, therefore, sought to control and guide former enemy states so that they would adopt the "right" kind of government (above). In regard to newer states, Truman espoused the principles of self-determination and anti-colonialism as fervently as did Wilson. As with Wilson, however, the actualization of these principles often seemed to him to depend upon American

influence, for the powerful United States could give struggling new nations the technical, financial and governmental expertise which they did not have themselves. America's mission qua generous and shining example evolved still further after World War II than after World War I into America's mission qua redeemer of errant nations and benefactor of the needy and oppressed. Truman believed that our active mission would serve the causes of freedom and justice while removing the causes of instability and war which threatened to destroy us.

As did Wilson, Truman had to decide on the best way to balance the principles of self-determination and non-interference with his goals of modernization and democratization. Early on, he struggled to find such a balance. For example, in describing U.S. aims with regard to China on November 13, 1945, Truman declared that "In line with its often expressed views regarding self-determination, the United States considers that the detailed steps necessary to the achievement of political unity in China must be worked out by the Chinese people themselves and that intervention by any foreign government in these matters would be inappropriate." He immediately qualified that statement, stipulating that "The United States Government feels, however, that China has a clear responsibility to the other United Nations to eliminate armed conflict within its territory as constituting a threat to stability and peace—a responsibility shared by the National Government and all Chinese political and military groups."<sup>55</sup> The connection between the internal political situation and the external behavior of states meant that the principle of non-interference required modification:

It is the firm belief of this Government that a strong, united and democratic China is of the utmost importance to the success of this United Nations organization and for the world peace. . . . The United States Government has long subscribed to the principle that the management of internal affairs is the responsibility of the peoples of the sovereign nations. Events of this century, however, would indicate that a breach of peace anywhere in the world threatens the peace of the entire world. It is thus in the most vital interest of the United States and all the United Nations that the people of China overlook no opportunity to adjust their internal differences promptly by methods of peaceful negotiation.<sup>56</sup>

Again, on April 6, 1946, Truman attempted to reconcile the potentially conflicting principles of self-determination and non-interference with the assertion of the United States' "right" to work for peace and democracy. He declared that U.S. foreign policy was "based squarely upon the pursuit of peace and justice" and that "it definitely rejects any selfish advantage for ourselves." The United States, he said, "would not interfere in any way with governments of other peace-loving people." On the other hand, he clearly claimed the right to involvement in the internal affairs of other countries when peace and freedom depended upon it, saying, "In the Far East, as elsewhere, we shall encourage the growth

and spread of democracy and civil liberties." It was part of his "strategy of peace" to "assist in the rehabilitation and development of the Far Eastern Countries." We recognized "that the Soviet Union and the British Commonwealth, and other nations have important interests in the Far East."<sup>57</sup> Truman stipulated, however, that "In return we expect recognition by them that we also have an interest in maintaining peace and security in that area. We expect understanding on their part that our objectives are dedicated to the pursuit of peace; and we shall expect them to pursue the same objectives."<sup>58</sup>

It is evident that most of Truman's early differences with Wilsonian internationalism took the form of qualifications to that creed. In his support of the U.N., in his emphasis on the United States' responsibilities in the world; in his linking of democracy with the spiritual and economic betterment of mankind; in his insistence upon America's role as moral and economic leader; in his belief that American power now stemmed from unity with the world, not from detachment from it; in his conviction that a more democratic world would be a more peaceful and secure world; and, in his admonishments that we live up to the best of our political-philosophical traditions while learning from our mistakes, Truman echoed Wilson's sentiments.

Nevertheless, some of Truman's early differences with Wilson were striking. In his early concern for preparedness as an essential component of national security, and in his belief that European and American security depended upon the maintenance of the proper military balance in Europe lay the seeds of his later plunge into European geopolitics—an eventuality which Wilson had deprecated and sought to avoid. Moreover, in his early willingness to tolerate Soviet imperfections for the sake of "collective security" and peace lay the seeds of his later willingness to accept and indeed to countenance a divided world for the sake of avoiding war. To Wilson, a divided world and a peaceful world were, quite simply, incongruous.

Truman, like Wilson, viewed interfering in the affairs of other nations as something which sometimes *had* to be undertaken for peace and for American principles. On the other hand, he was more willing than Wilson to acknowledge situations where not interfering was a necessity. Confirmation can be found in the following discussion of Truman's relationship with the legacy of FDR that Truman was at once more thorough and rigorous than Wilson in working for democracy where he thought it was possible and (initially) more willing than Wilson to acknowledge that it was not always possible.

## FDR

In his policies before Pearl Harbor and in his policies as World War II drew to a conclusion, the precariousness of Roosevelt's connection with Wilson is apparent. The scenario Wilson dreaded turned into ugly reality as aggressive, fascist powers initially encountered neither the moral and diplomatic resistance nor the military resolve of the United States. Those who argue today that we

should put "our economy first" should remember that in the 1930s the American and British governments did just that. Paul Johnson points out that in the early 1930s, the American army, with 132,069 officers and men, was only the sixteenth largest in the world, smaller than those of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Turkey, Spain and Rumania. He also points to the diplomatic papers which "abundantly testify" that Roosevelt would not discuss specific military and diplomatic backing for Britain and France against Germany. Indeed, Roosevelt refused to explicitly approve of League sanctions against the hostile powers.<sup>59</sup> Such an approach was a long way from the commitment to European defense and to an open world economy which Wilson had worked for.

Roosevelt's response to fascist aggression was to go along with the non-interventionist mood of the country, while gently and gradually prodding the public and Congress toward intervention. Because he needed wide support for his innovative legislation dealing with the Depression, he would not initiate a foreign policy for which he lacked a consensus. He accepted, although with reservation, neutrality legislation designed to keep America out of the war. The Lend-Lease program was an ingenious way of providing substantial aid to Europe without entering the conflict. After the fall of Poland and France, Roosevelt did begin to use prerogative powers to bypass an isolationist Congress, pushing through a "destroyer deal" with Great Britain. We now know that by the time of Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt was looking for an excuse to enter the war, viewing American participation as essential and inevitable. We know also that, before this, Roosevelt had access to information regarding Nazi atrocities.

This raises the question of whether Roosevelt betrayed principle in failing to use the same powers of leadership and persuasion in mobilizing sentiment against fascism as he used in mobilizing sentiment for the New Deal. The necessity of finding a cure for the Depression while at the same time mustering congressional, popular and judicial support for the cure prevented him from using his impressive rhetorical skills to combat the nightmare of totalitarianism. Once America entered the war, Roosevelt did, of course, use impassioned rhetoric to invigorate the struggle.

Roosevelt, like Wilson, made his mark on the postwar world. His support of the U.N. combined with his wartime agreements contained his idea of a cooperative and yet geopolitically structured world order. The U.N. was an internationalist institution which, in addition to ensuring American involvement in world affairs, was to be a vehicle for "drawing Russia into extended cooperation with the West."

Roosevelt's dedication to internationalism was tempered by his willingness to accept a *pre*-Wilsonian power structure. His wartime strategy toward Russia was to work together toward a collective arrangement in which a balance of powers and spheres of influence would be recognized. In exchange for implicit recognition of a Soviet sphere in Eastern Europe, Roosevelt felt that the United States would, in a sense, have its sphere: in Japan, Italy, South America and certain islands in the Pacific. In addition, in exchange for cooperation with the



Soviets, Roosevelt hoped to gain their postwar cooperation, their agreement to the United States' conception of the U.N. and their entrance into the war against Japan. He hoped both to deter the expansiveness of the Soviet Union by creating a mutually adhered to balance, and, by collaborating with the Soviet Union, to prevent renewed aggression by the defeated states.

This approach, which emphasized at once the balance of power *between* the United States and the Soviet Union and cooperation *among* them was evident in Roosevelt's wartime agreements. It was evident in the Teheran Conference in which Roosevelt agreed in principle to proposed Polish boundaries and to Baltic territorial adjustments. It was evident at the Moscow Conference when, as Herbert Feis demonstrates, Stalin hinted at the possibility of exchanging U.S. acceptance of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe for Soviet acceptance of American dominance in Japan.<sup>60</sup> It was evident at Yalta when Roosevelt again agreed to territorial adjustments favorable to Russia, most notably in the Far East. It was evident in that, before Yalta, Roosevelt made occasional protestations to Stalin regarding the "London Poles" (those working for an independent Poland), but, valuing cooperation too highly, would go no further than that in working for Polish independence. (This is not to say that Roosevelt was a dupe to the Russians. He refused at Yalta to recognize a Russian sphere in the Middle East and, at Quebec, made an Atomic Monopoly Agreement with Great Britain.)

It is clear that, when he believed peace required it, Roosevelt was willing to subordinate Wilsonian principles to power relations. He was willing not only to tolerate but to accept the domination of one people—the Soviets—over another—the Eastern Europeans. Although Wilson himself tolerated Soviet excesses, he did so out of the hope that our restrained behavior combined with our opposition to imperialism and the extreme right would ultimately convince the Soviets to embrace our democratic alternative. Roosevelt had less hope of changing the Soviet political outlook; his hopes were more limited. He hoped, rather, through negotiating and cooperating with the Soviets, to convince them that it was in their best interest to negotiate and cooperate with us.

Roosevelt thereby permitted a curtailment of the U.S. mission. No longer the ardent champion of freedom everywhere, the United States was willing to accept the curtailment of freedom in certain areas of the world for the sake of peace. The end was still *partly* Wilsonian: Through mutual trust and the "policing" role of the powers, Roosevelt hoped to create a harmonious world. Indeed, Roosevelt emphasized the Wilsonian goal of world harmony at the expense of the Wilsonian goal of worldwide freedom. Of course, this assertion must be qualified: FDR realized that the security of free nations depended upon preventing the coming together of potentially hostile states. By cooperating with while counterbalancing the Soviets, Roosevelt hoped to prevent future attacks against freedom—whether from previous aggressor states or from the Soviets themselves.

The large-scale occupation of countries during the war led to the question of

how those countries were to be treated, to the question of domestic politics. The dawning realization that Soviet occupation was oppressive and cruel provided an obstacle to American-democratic goals. The Yalta solution to this problem was ambiguous. On the one hand, Roosevelt tacitly approved a Russian sphere, which meant that Russia could have the say over the internal situation of Russian-occupied areas such as Rumania. On the other hand, Roosevelt got Stalin and Churchill to sign the "Declaration on Liberated Europe," which upheld the principle of self-determination and indicated that the occupied areas should be able to choose their form of government. But, as Vojtech Mastny notes, the "Declaration" was "issued largely for public consumption."<sup>61</sup> Roosevelt knew that Stalin would not permit free elections in Russian-occupied areas. Whereas Wilson had used words as weapons, Roosevelt frequently used words as facades. The "Declaration on Liberated Europe" and the "Atlantic Charter" were designed less to inspire and invigorate the people than to assuage them and compensate them for the reality which could not live up to those words.

Fraser Harbutt argues convincingly that Roosevelt's "eminently practical objective" was "to keep together, for the purposes of the war, the two fundamental sources of power he perceived in the tripartite alliance: American public opinion and the Soviet leadership." Harbutt points out, however, that he did this by means of "a dualistic policy that made postwar collaboration unlikely":

Thus, on the one hand, with varying degrees of assistance from Stalin and Churchill, he animated the American people with a steady stream of loosely phrased but highly principled public pronouncements that, from the Atlantic Charter in 1941 to the Declaration on Liberated Europe in 1945, cast a consistently harmonious glow upon the tripartite alliance. At the same time he cultivated Stalin with carefully vague assurances. But toward the end of the war as the Soviets gained the military and political initiative in Europe and in the final confrontation with Japan, he felt obliged to transform these into specific private promises of support for Soviet postwar objectives that, he must have realized, controverted the public moralistic declarations. What began in 1942 with expressions of sympathetic interest in Russia's postwar security and cloudy vistas of "the Four Policemen" ended at Yalta with the President's conditional agreement to the Curzon Line, the Lublin Communist core of a reconstituted Polish government, and promises of support for Far Eastern cessions to the Soviet Union at Japanese and Chinese expense.<sup>62</sup>

In the early years of the Truman administration the combined enunciation of universalistic principles and the practical compliance with the situation in areas where the Red Army had exerted itself continued. One difference seems to be that when Truman expressed principled opposition to Soviet activities in Poland and the Balkans he really did object, viewing those activities as *undermining* cooperation. Although Truman was not willing to recognize a Soviet sphere as legitimate, his policies continued to amount to recognition. Before delving into

the substantial philosophical differences between Roosevelt and Truman, let us confirm this fact.

Churchill's recommendations that Anglo-American forces in Europe push as far east as possible was rejected by Marshall and Eisenhower with Truman's approval, on the grounds that we should adhere to the established military spheres of Europe lest we alienate the Russians. Churchill also implored Truman to delay deploying major military units from Europe to the Far East and the Pacific. Truman, however, accepted the arguments of the Joint Chiefs, who favored a quick resolution of the war against Japan. Not only did U.S. troops not move into Eastern Europe; they also quickly withdrew from those Eastern European areas which they already occupied and where the United States thereby stood a chance of making its political influence felt. For example, when, presumably at Moscow's insistence, President Benes of Czechoslovakia requested the withdrawal of American troops, privately informing the British ambassador that he desired the simultaneous departure of Soviet and American forces, the State Department agreed even though it was not yet certain that Moscow would comply.<sup>63</sup> When the fighting ended, Soviet forces occupied Germany to the Elbe River, and parts of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Austria. They superseded even the generous zones of occupation agreed to at Quebec and Yalta.

In *The Diplomacy of Silence*, Hugh De Santis gives ample evidence of the passivity with which the State Department, with Truman's approval, responded to the complaints of foreign service officials that Russia was violating the Declaration on Liberated Europe and the Atlantic Charter in Eastern Europe.<sup>64</sup> American policymakers did attempt to gain some modicum of political concessions from Russia as a contingency for signing peace treaties with Russian satellites such as Rumania and Hungary. Truman found it difficult to swallow the British position that those governments might have to be recognized without political concessions for the sake of geopolitical stability. In effect, he found it difficult to look at the divisions forming in Europe in terms of power alone.

On the other hand, with the war over and with Soviet troops well entrenched, American policymakers increasingly viewed political oppression in Eastern Europe as a disturbing fact which they could do little to alter without engaging in another war. A principled stance was, then, perhaps just that, a stance, which would have little bearing on the lives of Eastern Europeans.

It was true that a principled stance *sometimes* played right into Russian hands. In a letter to the Secretary of State on June 21, 1946, the representative in Bulgaria recommended signing a peace treaty with Bulgaria on the grounds that the policy of non-recognition only gave Russian troops an "excuse" to stay:

Opposition leaders have for some time now accepted force of contention that benefits to all of treaty providing for withdrawal of Russian troops would in end far exceed any momentary advantage for Opposition to be gained by causing policy on non-recognition to extreme of refusing to sign satisfactory treaty with Government that tolerates Communist excesses such as current tels. have reported.<sup>65</sup>

Soon, however, the representative was reporting that the withdrawal of forces, if it ever occurred, would hardly matter because the communists were so swiftly and adeptly consolidating their power. On June 29 he reported: "Local feeling very depressed as it is felt that withdrawal of USSR armed forces from Bulgaria will have no influence on local situation as Communist control of Bulgarian Army, militia and political posts will be assured complete freedom of action dominating without recourse a suppressed majority of population."<sup>66</sup>

The consolidation of power by the Soviet-backed communists in Bulgaria was typical of that occurring throughout Eastern Europe. On August 23, 1946, the representative submitted to the Secretary of State an excerpt from a July 31 letter from General Robertson to the War Department describing the process:

Bulgaria is in the process of being thoroughly communized by every means short of a blood bath. . . . There is no freedom of speech or press; purges in the Army, Navy and other Government agencies are in progress in a large way; purge of schools, both teachers and students, is going on; expropriation of property is extensively used as a purge method as well as for obtaining needed funds; arrests, disappearances, intimidations and beatings are widespread; the Orthodox Church is under attack for failure to aid Communist activities; Free Masonry is indicted as Fascist, reactionary and treasonable. All of the foregoing add up to a reign of terror about which the world at large is as yet uninformed but of which the world will someday know.<sup>67</sup>

Truman did little to inform the world about this reign of terror. As the political situation worsened still further, the representative asked for some sort of statement. Yet, Truman did not speak out. Truman did seek to find ways that a peace treaty could be brought into effect "without formal recognition" of the Bulgarian government (above). However, during 1945 and 1946, Truman and his administration were largely apathetic and silent about political oppression in Bulgaria and throughout the Balkans. By the time of the Paris Peace Conference, they had decided to approve the peace treaties without pressing for an improvement in Balkan politics.

In an October 1947 article in *Foreign Affairs*, John C. Campbell described the Conference. He said that much attention was given to where the line would be drawn *between* east and west, whereas boundary disputes and ideological disagreements *within* the eastern or western zones were not taken seriously by the powers:

There was a line running through Europe dividing the Soviet sphere from that of the western powers. As the treaty negotiations turned out to be a phase of the contest between east and west for power and influence, the most hotly contested territorial issues were those which involved the location of that line: The dispute over Venezia Giulia and the controversies involving the northern frontier of Greece. In the treatment of these issues considerations of strategy, power and prestige were paramount. East of the dividing line the United States showed little inclination to tilt at windmills by pressing for "ethnic lines" and "fair solutions."<sup>68</sup>

Campbell tells us that the American delegation did not want to impose harsh terms on Italy for reasons similar to those for their concern over the city of Trieste (ceded to Italy after World War I and contested by Yugoslavia and Russia after World War II). One concern was the desire to keep Italy in the American orbit:

After the Balkans fell into Soviet hands and the Yalta agreements calling for a joint approach in Eastern Europe broke down, Italy took on added significance as a part of the western democratic grouping. A harsh peace treaty which would play into the hands of Italian extremists might have a disastrous effect on the Anglo-American position in Italy and the Mediterranean. The United States wanted a treaty which a democratic Italy would accept.<sup>69</sup>

Thus, the U.S. delegation weighed geopolitical considerations heavily. Already there were hints of the containment policy which would aim at creating a balance on the European continent by building up democracy in Western Europe, rather than at challenging the Soviet sphere directly. Indeed, the Council officially approved the treaties of Italy, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland.

Germany, meanwhile, was coming to be a symbol of the struggle between the ideologies of democracy and communism and of the struggle regarding "where the line would be drawn" between east and west. Even though U.S. policy aimed at the formation of a united Germany, Russian occupiers proceeded to inculcate East Germans in their zone to communist political procedures while General Clay and American occupying forces proceeded to restore local government to West Germans along democratic lines. George Kennan would soon warn of a Soviet program for taking over all Germany. As early as September 1946, Byrnes' "Stuttgart Speech" indicated a reorientation of American policy away from a punitive approach and toward an attempt to restore Germany so that it could contribute to the recovery and to the strategic viability of Western Europe.

It is not difficult to understand why Truman did not take a hard line in the Balkans or Eastern Germany where Soviet power was overwhelming, where Soviet goals were unyielding, and where diplomatic agreements had *already* implied an impassive American response. It *is* difficult to understand why Truman did not take a hard line in Poland, where Soviet power and Soviet intentions were less well defined. (The answer seems to lie partly in the fact that Truman, *at first*, placed some merit in Roosevelt's belief that if we cooperated with the Soviets, they would cooperate with us. In his *Memoirs*, he recalled, "I had hoped that the Russians would return favor for favor, but almost from the time I became President I found them acting without regard for their neighboring nations and in direct violation of the obligations they had assumed at Yalta.")<sup>70</sup>

Dismayed by the breakdown of the "Moscow Commission," the arrest of sixteen Polish leaders and the unwillingness of the State Department to demand Moscow's compliance with its agreement on Poland, the American diplomat Lane admonished the State Department to defend American principles. His pro-

tests were received largely with indifference. On April 18, 1945, Truman did issue a joint message with Churchill to Stalin sharply criticizing Russian policies in forming the new Polish regime. But, Stalin's reply being harsh and unyielding, Truman decided that a conciliatory approach might fare better. In May, he sent Harry Hopkins to Moscow and Joseph E. Davies to London to prepare the way for a big three conference. Hopkins was permitted to approve Stalin's list of new candidates for the Polish government. He did get in return Stalin's agreement to the American position on the U.N. voting procedure, on the unification of China under Chiang Kai Shek and on the Open Door principle there. The Hopkins-Davies "missions" ruined any chance that Russia might think Britain and the United States were "ganging up" on them, which, as Adam Ulam notes, was precisely what Churchill wanted: some display of unity which would have tested and strained Stalin's resolve.<sup>71</sup>

On July 5, 1945, Truman recognized the new Polish government even though the intention of Russia to impose its political system on Poland was obvious. In May, Stalin had sent a note saying that the only people to be consulted in the new Polish regime would be those ready to collaborate with the USSR. Although a few outsiders were allowed to join the provisional government and reformist Stanislaw Mikolajczyk was appointed Deputy Premier, this was a position "with virtually no powers and soon with no influence."<sup>72</sup>

In defending his decision, Truman announced that the new Polish Provisional Government of National Unity had informed him "that it has recognized in their entirety the decisions of the Crimea Conference on the Polish question." The new government, he said, "has thereby confirmed its intention to carry out the Crimea decisions with respect to the holding of elections."<sup>73</sup> A briefing of June 29 outlined American policy toward Poland in a principled fashion. And yet, as those principles were violated further, the United States could and did do little besides utter occasional protests.

The Rooseveltian practice of disguising unprincipled agreements with the pretense of principle was one with which Truman never felt comfortable (one with which he already publicly disagreed) and which he would soon abandon. He would also abandon the idea that cooperation was to be valued in and of itself, even if principles had to be sacrificed for the sake of it. Truman's own approach toward Poland was the very approach he would implicitly denounce for the rest of his life.

It should be noted that an insistence on Stalin's adherence to the Yalta formula would have been of limited significance as a means of demonstrating resolve regarding Poland, for the Yalta solution to the problem of how occupied countries were to be governed had itself been ambiguous. Although Roosevelt did get Stalin to sign the Declaration on Liberated Europe, the Conference was not explicit about the fulfillment of that formula. Vojtech Mastny notes that after pressing Stalin for free elections in Poland, Churchill "inexplicitly neglected to pin Stalin down on a firm date." Instead, he "offered him a loophole by observing that there was no hurry and that even two months would do."<sup>74</sup> More-

over, Roosevelt agreed to only "non-Fascist and anti-Fascist parties" being allowed to take part in the Polish elections. The Russians would be able to take advantage of these ambiguities. While the Western powers interpreted the Yalta Agreement to require the reorganization and restructuring of the Polish government, the Soviets interpreted it to require only token enlargement of the Polish government with only token elections of communist (their interpretation of "non-fascist") candidates. The Declaration on Liberated Europe itself contained escape clauses. Stalin changed it so that instead of pledging "to immediately establish appropriate machinery for the carrying out of the joint responsibilities set forth in this declaration," the signatories were merely obliged to "immediately take measures for the carrying out of mutual consultation." As Mastny puts it, "Translated into plain language, this meant that in eastern Europe, the peoples' rights of political expression enunciated by the document were not to be guaranteed institutionally but left to Soviet discretion."<sup>75</sup>

These ambiguities in the wartime agreements with Stalin suggest that bargaining with Stalin was not, as Truman and many in his administration soon came to believe, necessarily futile. Rather, they demonstrate that agreements with Stalin should have been more precise, dogmatic and specific. It is true, however, that once Stalin's hold on Eastern Europe was assured and once he attempted to expand the Russian sphere of influence still further, little could be accomplished through bargaining until the West had something to bargain with. With the situation in Eastern Europe being forcefully determined by the Soviet Union while the situation in Western Europe lingered in precarious abeyance, Truman would rightfully come to the conclusion that something would have to be done about restoring the power of and bolstering democracy in the West.

Before turning to the containment policies of 1947, however, we need to attempt to reconcile Truman's early emphasis on Wilson's principles with his early acceptance of Roosevelt's policies, for Truman was well aware that the Russians were violating and would continue to violate Wilsonian principles. Wilson could consistently espouse universalistic principles while at the same time tolerating Russian excesses because he believed in the possibility that good treatment of the Soviets might ultimately inspire them to change their political way of life. Truman, however, had what John Lewis Gaddis calls a "healthy skepticism" toward all forms of totalitarianism from the start. Although he expected more cooperation than he received, he also expected the Soviet Union to stay on a totalitarian course. Truman's stance cannot be explained merely as a continuation of Roosevelt's plan to accept some sort of Soviet domination of Eastern Europe while disguising that domination with verbal facades; if one thing comes through in a study of Truman and his works, it is the sincerity with which he held and espoused his convictions. Although Truman did attempt to disguise the real outcome of his policies toward Poland, words, for him, were rarely facades. Wilson's legacy was never, to him, a mere umbrella over more "realistic" policies. Rather, Truman always considered Wilson's policies to be an essential part of his own.

We will see that the explanation does lie in Truman's rejection of certain *parts* of Wilson's legacy. We will see in addition, however, that Truman's embracing of Roosevelt's approach was much more half-hearted, much more tentative than attention to policies without attention to the ideas behind them would lead us to believe.

Although believing in the special mission of the United States as fervently as did Wilson, Truman was much more willing to recognize instances where the United States *could not* interfere in the affairs of others. In his speeches, we see side by side the hope for the universalization of American principles and the opinion that we may not be able to actuate those principles anywhere and every time they are threatened (above). Truman insisted that we would neither approve nor recognize governments imposed by force. On the other hand, he admitted that we might not always be able to prevent the imposition of such governments:

We shall refuse to recognize any government imposed upon any nation by the force of any foreign power. In some cases it may be impossible to prevent forceful imposition of such a government. But the United States will not recognize any such government.<sup>76</sup>

The fact that the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe was one of those situations which, Truman believed, it was "impossible to prevent" due to the fact that the Yalta Agreement had already been signed and the Red Army was already in place helps, of course, to explain Truman's initial silence regarding Soviet activities in the Balkans. But there was more to it than that.

First, while in the war, he accepted Roosevelt's assumption that some toleration of Soviet activities in the Balkans was necessary to assure Russia's entrance into the war against Japan. In his *Memoirs*, he recalled, "I did not want to become involved in the Balkans in a way that would lead us into another world conflict. In any case, I was anxious to get the Russians into the war against Japan as soon as possible, thus saving the lives of countless Americans."<sup>77</sup> Second, with the war fresh in his mind he did not at first reject Roosevelt's idea that Russian cooperation was needed to control and police former enemy states. In the above speech, he added: "By the combined and cooperative action of our war allies, we shall help the defeated enemy states establish peaceful democratic governments of their own free choice. And we shall try to attain a world in which Nazism, Fascism and military aggression cannot exist."<sup>78</sup>

Finally, he saw a concrete advantage to be gained for the American cause by living up to wartime agreements, even, if those agreements sometimes belittled the cause. Like Wilson, Truman believed part of our strength lay in our reputation. While Russia "took" its "friends" by occupying territory, Truman was determined that the United States would "win" its friends by demonstrating that it was a country which honored its agreements and lived up to its commitments. It was not just whether we exerted our strength but also the *manner* in which we exerted our strength which was seen as having a decisive impact on future civilization.



It was, for example, partly in order to save our reputation that Truman protested against de Gaulle's nationalistic military maneuvers in Syria, Italy and Lebanon. He reflected, "At a time when we were lecturing Russia on keeping her agreements, and telling Tito how to behave in territorial matters, the unilateral French tactics were embarrassing as well as potentially dangerous."<sup>79</sup> Truman explained his unwillingness to take Churchill's advice regarding the positioning of U.S. troops in Europe (above) in part by his belief that it was only by living up to our wartime agreements that we could insist that the Soviets live up to theirs:

To be sure, I agreed with Churchill that it would be desirable to hold the great cities of Berlin, Prague, and Vienna, but the fact was that, like the countries of eastern Europe, these cities were under Russian control or about to fall under her control. The Russians were in a strong position, and they knew it. On the other hand, if they were firm in their way, we could be firm in ours. And our way was to stick to our agreements and keep insisting that they do the same. And by insisting on orderly procedure, I meant to insist on important details.<sup>80</sup>

Finally, if Truman tended to insist upon our adherence to wartime agreements, this is not to say that he *agreed* with Roosevelt's wartime agreements; combined with the idea that we should live up to our wartime agreements was the idea that some of those agreements shouldn't have been made in the first place. Truman noted in his *Memoirs* that Churchill had pointed out to him that the occupation zones had been agreed to "in some haste." Truman commented, "This shows conclusively that heads of state should be very careful about horseback agreements, because there is no way of telling the final result."<sup>81</sup>

We see in Truman's early years as president the combined resignation to a Soviet sphere and the principled belief that the Soviets should, insofar as possible, not have been allowed a sphere in the first place. It is thus that although that sphere might be tolerated, it would never be accepted. It is thus that Truman's adoption of Roosevelt's approach toward Russia was, from the start, provisional. Although Truman, like Roosevelt, was willing to live in a less-than-perfect world, he had a lower threshold of toleration for imperfection than did Roosevelt.

Again, it must be emphasized that where there was mention of the need to "get along" in Truman's speeches, there was always also a qualifying reminder of our "high principles." In an especially telling October 27, 1945 speech, Truman pronounced:

Differences of the kind that exist today among nations that fought together so long and so valiantly for victory are not hopeless or irreconcilable. There are no conflicts of interest among the victorious powers so deeply rooted that they cannot be resolved. But their solution will require a combination of forbearance and firmness. It will require a steadfast adherence to the high principles which we have enunciated. It will also require a willingness to find common ground as to the methods of applying those principles.<sup>82</sup>

In that speech, Truman listed as the fundamental principles of American foreign policy unselfishness and self-determination in two of the three senses to which Wilson had alluded: of nations and of individuals. The four "fundamentals" were:

1. We seek no territorial expansion or selfish advantage. We have no plans for aggression against any other state large or small. We have no objectives which need clash with the peaceful aims of any other nation.
2. We believe in the eventual return of sovereign rights and self-government to all peoples who have been deprived of them by force.
3. We shall approve no territorial changes in any part of the world unless they accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned.
4. We believe that all peoples who are prepared for self-government should be permitted to choose their own form of government without interference from any foreign source. That is true in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, as well as in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>83</sup>

Clearly, if Truman believed these were the fundamentals of U.S. foreign policy, cooperation with the Soviet Union, whose foreign policy rested on calculated albeit cautious expansionism, and silence regarding Soviet activities were problematical from the start.

The tentativeness with which Truman embraced Roosevelt's approach was indeed apparent from the start. His response to Soviet aggression in Iran, Turkey and Yugoslavia suggests that he cooperated with the Soviets *less* out of hopes that this would lead them to cooperate with the United States than out of the belief that there was no use interfering in areas where the Red Army was already firmly in place. His policies toward these areas show that, even as early as 1945 and 1946, he was willing to take a strong stand against the *expansion* of Soviet influence, a stand which might *jeopardize* cooperation.

Truman took concrete steps in 1945 to prevent the fulfillment of the Yugoslav dictator Tito's ambitions in the northeastern Italian province of Venezia Giulia. Instructions were given to Allied headquarters in that province "to establish effective control even if it becomes necessary to use the overwhelming force of allied military strength."<sup>84</sup> Several days later, Stettinius conveyed his government's profound displeasure to the Yugoslav government. Such actions paid off. With the Soviets unwilling to take a strong stand in defense of Yugoslavia's territorial ambitions, Tito withdrew his forces from the disputed zone at the end of the month.

And in Iran, at the Teheran Conference, FDR, Churchill and Stalin had signed a declaration reaffirming Iran's territorial integrity while, at the London Conference, the Foreign Ministers had agreed that all foreign forces would be withdrawn from Iran within six months after the Japanese surrender. After the war, the Soviets both hedged on the withdrawal of troops and used their troops to support a dissident communist movement for autonomy in Azerbaijan. The United States made repeated protests to the Soviet Union and supported the

Iranian position. In March 1946, the Americans stepped up the pressure. The State Department sent a note to Moscow alleging violation of the Teheran Declarations and saying that the United States could not "remain indifferent." The note called for the immediate withdrawal of all Soviet forces.

When Iran, at the urging of Secretary of State James Byrnes, asked that the issue be placed on the Security Council agenda for March 25, the United States refused the Soviet request for postponement. By March 20, the Soviets had announced that, in exchange for a share in Iranian oil, all Soviet troops would be withdrawn. The Soviets created suspicion, however, when they suddenly presented a less compromising proposal to the Iranians, and when Gromyko again asked for a U.N. postponement of the Iranian question. With Byrnes himself sitting on the Security Council and denouncing Soviet actions on March 26 in order to demonstrate U.S. resolve, Gromyko was voted down. Within weeks Soviet troops were withdrawn and Azerbaijan remained part of Iran. In all this, Byrnes had Truman's public and private support.

And regarding Turkey, at Yalta, Stalin had announced that he would demand a revision of the Montreaux Conventions on the Black Sea Straits. Although this demand had concerned a revision in consultation with all the signatories of the Convention, the Soviet Union now was attempting to impose its will unilaterally by intimidating Turkey. It demanded a predominant role in administering and defending the Straits and, in addition, demanded the establishment of Russian bases in the Dardanelles and Turkey's cession of formerly czarist territories in the Caucasus. Truman responded by expressing support of the Turkish position to Turkey and by protesting the Russian position and proposing the internationalization of waterways at Potsdam. But he did more than that; in August 1946, he dispatched warships to the Mediterranean as a display of American interest in the region. The Truman Doctrine of 1947 would, of course, provide the ultimate response.

Although Truman's stand on Yugoslavia occurred in 1945 and on Iran and Turkey in 1946, thereby suggesting continuity, Fraser Harbutt does demonstrate a change in Truman's and Byrnes' approaches toward the Soviet Union at about the time of Churchill's Iron Curtain Speech of March 1946.<sup>85</sup> Previously leary of Anglo-American cooperation at the expense of the Soviet Union, and having clearly demonstrated the desire to come to some sort of an understanding with the Soviet Union, Truman and Byrnes began to change their tune on both fronts. They began to openly encourage Anglo-American cooperation and to demonstrate a willingness to risk a falling out with the Soviet Union for the sake of depriving it of further territorial or diplomatic gains. The evidence is clear, as Harbutt shows, that Truman, fearing the political fallout if he did so himself, licensed Churchill to advocate an Anglo-American combination whose purpose was the containment and eventual retraction of Soviet power. Churchill's wartime conception of Anglo-American unity and Roosevelt's wartime conception of the U.N. as a deterrent to future territorial transgressions provided a partial basis for this policy:

Truman, then, did not act alone. Indeed, he and Byrnes were successful in moving the United States forward at this time only because they were able to bring into play against the Soviets the two interacting political entities developed by the proceeding generation of leadership: the Anglo-American conception promoted by Churchill as a necessary counter to Soviet power, and the United Nations forum of Roosevelt's in which that controversial conception was finally able to take root. Thus, the two Allied wartime leaders, so often portrayed as Stalin's dupes, in fact created the instruments that confounded him.<sup>86</sup>

If Truman's use of the U.N. as a forum for exposing wrongs and mobilizing public opinion and, on the other hand, his tolerance of the *de facto* Soviet sphere reflected the legacies of Wilson and Roosevelt, his move toward containment was a move toward uncharted American territory, territory both Wilson and Roosevelt had sought to avoid. Truman was both more willing than Roosevelt to build a geopolitical power structure which the Soviets would perceive as threatening for the sake of democratic principles, and more willing than Wilson to accept a distribution of power which would curtail the universal application of those principles. If Truman's stand against Soviet expansion was underlain by the desire to assert democratic principles, the assertion of these principles was underlain by a desire to forestall the expansion of Soviet power.

On January 21, 1946, indicating his initial hope that a cooperative approach was compatible with both the United States' concern for a more stable world and for a more just world, Truman announced:

It will be the continuing policy of the United States to use all its influence to foster, support, and develop the United Nations Organization in its purpose of preventing international war. If peace is to endure it must rest upon justice no less than upon power. . . . One proposition is that lasting peace requires genuine understanding and active cooperation among the most powerful nations. Another is that even the support of the strongest nations cannot guarantee a peace unless it is infused with the quality of justice for all nations.<sup>87</sup>

The problem for Truman was, as it has been for many presidents, that cooperation was too often at odds with justice, and, at the same time, too often at odds with a stable power configuration. This meant that peace (the right kind of peace) rested upon a delicate balancing act between the maximum possible cooperation with other states and the maximum possible intolerance of transgressions against justice (which included transgressions against territorial sovereignty).

Considerations of power and justice had, Truman believed, to be integrally related if the world were to have a lasting peace. Peace, in turn, was essential for the further evolution of democratic ideas and practices. Truman's foreign policy bespeaks his emerging conviction that the most just, secure and peaceable solution to the world's problems was one which contained and frustrated the power of the Soviet Union while making the world aware of Soviet transgressions.

By early 1946, Truman was expressing doubt that accepting Soviet ambitions in Eastern Europe would deter the Soviets from pursuing expansionist ambitions anywhere else, or temper the fervency with which they dominated those they already controlled. While that hope remained, there had been something both principled and practical about accepting a Soviet sphere in the Balkans. Now, however, it was clear that the Soviet political system would be imposed upon the Balkans in the harshest of manners; that the satisfaction of Soviet ambitions in the Balkans did not preclude their pursuit of further territorial and political gains; and, finally, that the promise of a more just world coming out of the joint supervision of former enemy states might be nil if one of the "supervising" powers turned out to be no more concerned with justice than the former enemy states themselves. Thus, it became increasingly difficult for Truman to reconcile the peace-oriented goals of a more cooperative world and of a more just world. He would soon find little reason to favor a policy of *accepting* the Soviet position.

Interestingly, Truman's abiding concern for peace compelled him to modify with patience his move toward a firm stand toward the Soviets; for if Truman was becoming determined to stop further Soviet expansion and to expose the totalitarian methods which the Soviets liked to hide behind democratic facades, he also continued to view Soviet power as a fact which had to be tolerated—not accepted—lest we find ourselves in another world war. His January 1946 letter to Byrnes reveals the likelihood that Truman's new firmness approach to Russian activities in the Balkans was designed not so much to alter the situation there as to make Russia afraid to advance anywhere else: in this case, into Turkey, Iran and the Mediterranean:

There isn't a doubt in my mind that Russia intends an invasion of Turkey and the seizure of the Black Sea Straits to the Mediterranean. Unless Russia is faced with an iron fist and strong language another war is in the making. . . . I do not think we should play compromise any longer. We should refuse to recognize Rumania and Bulgaria until they comply with our requirements; we should let our position in Iran be known in no uncertain terms and we should continue to insist on the internationalization of the Keil Canal, the Rhine-Danube waterway and the Black Sea Straits and we should maintain complete control of Japan and the Pacific. We should rehabilitate China and create a strong central government there. We should do the same for Korea.<sup>88</sup>

It is obvious and yet notable that the positive measures Truman proposed applied to places where Soviet power had not yet fully been asserted. Thus, as early as the beginning of 1946, there were intimations of containment, intimations of division in Europe, and signs that American policy might have to focus on the area up to and not beyond the "iron curtain."

The narrowness of that focus resulted from the restrictions which Soviet power placed on the actualization of our principles. The purpose of that focus, however, had everything to do with principle. It had to do with Truman's de-

termination to defend and diffuse those fundamentals of American foreign policy in which he so sincerely believed. The power of the West had to be restored not just because Western Europe (and hence the United States) appeared to be threatened, but because of what Western Europe potentially stood for: the triumph of democratic over totalitarian forms of government.

Truman's firing of Henry Wallace as Secretary of Commerce revealed the evolution of Truman's thinking. Truman rejected Wallace both because of his inability to understand the exigencies of power and because he was willing to forsake principles for the sake of a balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union. Wallace tended to view aggressive Russian behavior as largely a response to U.S. behavior, which was viewed by them as antagonistic or threatening. The U.S. monopoly over the atomic bomb was one such "threat." He felt that a foreign policy based on a defensive posture toward the Soviet Union would only increase Soviet hostility toward us. He saw little to be gained from an increase in armaments and saw even the meager postwar defense budget as far too threatening to the Soviet Union and costly to us. In his Madison Square Garden Address, Wallace warned, "The tougher we get, the tougher the Russians will get."<sup>89</sup> Conversely, Truman believed that power was necessary to counteract aggressive power; that good deeds and cooperativeness on our part were insufficient for incurring good deeds and cooperativeness on the part of the Soviet Union.

Underlying just as fundamental a difference between them, Wallace seemed to suggest that Truman treat Soviet actions in a morally neutral way. In his Madison Square Garden Address, Wallace insisted that we should "accept" a Soviet sphere and implied that we should accommodate our interests to the Soviet Union even if certain Soviet activities were morally repugnant to us. In fact, Wallace saw an absence of real conflicts between the interests of Russia and the interests of the United States. Truman could never view the interests of a totalitarian power as basically compatible with our own. And, he could never forsake American principles. Like Wilson, he saw one of his key responsibilities as president as that of championing those principles which distinguished the American democracy and which were a challenge to *all* forms of political oppression.

It was thus that Truman viewed his foreign policy as fundamentally different from that envisaged by the Wallacite camp and that initially pursued by Byrnes. It was not only his different understanding of power, but also his desire to uphold the precepts of U.S. government and to enhance esteemed American traditions which, he indicated, separated him from them. Two hours after asking for Wallace's resignation, Truman called a press conference and told reporters:

The foreign policy of this country is the most important question confronting us today. Our responsibility for obtaining a just and lasting peace extends not only to the people of this country but to the nations of the world. . . . I have today asked Mr. Wallace to resign from the Cabinet. It had become clear that between his views on foreign policy

and those of the administration—the latter being shared, I am confident, by the great body of our citizens—there was a fundamental conflict.<sup>90</sup>

The Wallace incident foretold both Truman's resolve to increase the United States' power relative to the Soviet Union, and the inflamed passion with which he would use American principles to fight Soviet ideology.

## THE INSEPARABILITY OF MISSION AND POWER IN TRUMAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

Although Truman acknowledged that the possibilities for applying American principles universally were limited, recognizing limitations regarding the application of principles is not the same as forsaking them. Uppermost in Truman's mind were the questions: Power—of what? Interest—of what? Survival—of what? He saw that it is never merely power, interest or survival that concerns foreign policy but the power, interest and survival of *something*. That something has everything to do with principles, for it has to do with the nature and character of regimes. Truman's *minimum* foreign policy goal was the survival of democracy and freedom.

It is clearly in a country's interest to protect its regime. But the regime is worth protecting because of what it means, what it stands for, what it allows its citizens to be. All regimes have power, but they differ in what they value most. For example, during the war, it was not in the United States' interest to compel prisoners of war to death marches because this would have blatantly violated the terms the United States was fighting for: It would have violated its principles. On the other hand, it was in that interest to fight the war in the most efficacious way possible, albeit within the lines of civilized conduct; freedom depended upon the expenditure and skillful use of force. A fine line had to be drawn.

In his *Memoirs*, Truman tried to draw that line. He took the view that war was but a means to political objectives, that the military should nevertheless be given the leeway to do what is necessary to win the war and that, on the other hand, military objectives should never be allowed to go to such an extreme that they subvert the ideas behind the war or supersede the goal of winning it.<sup>91</sup> Truman came to believe that, in peacetime too, he would have to draw a fine line between political and geopolitical objectives or, rather, to keep the political grounded in the geopolitical and the geopolitical grounded in the political.

Wilson had defined the wartime divisions of the world in terms of the opposition between autocracy, militarism, imperialism and extremism—and democracy, self-determination, fair play and moderation. It followed that what was necessary for a divided world to become united was for autocrats and imperialists to become democrats with fair and equitable foreign policies. Indeed, Wilson had described the new world order in terms of a consensus regarding political structures and values. He defined peace itself not as the coexistence of

opposites but as the melding of activities and thoughts. Peace was defined in political terms (above).

Truman, while concurring with the Wilsonian ideas that democracy contributes to peace and that a unified and open world is a more peaceable one, nevertheless had to seek peace partly in terms of the coexistence of divergent political forms. Whereas Wilson viewed the balance of power as divisive and, therefore, destabilizing, Truman increasingly realized that peace and democracy in Europe depended on some kind of balance between East and West. One could not construct a plan for the postwar regeneration and rejuvenation of free states without also constructing plans to increase the power of these states relative to others. Confronted with Soviet domestic and foreign policies which were hostile to the free world, Truman announced that we had found by "trial and error" that "we had to assume a position of firmness in our effort to get a workable peace in the world." On April 23, 1948, by which time he had developed this idea further, he would expound:

The situation in the world today is a rather precarious one. Things are coming up all the time that are liable to create very strong discord between ourselves and the other great powers of the world. The World Wars, when they ended, left a vacuum in the power setup of the Eastern Hemisphere and also of the Western Hemisphere. And it is necessary to try and fill that vacuum, which we thought would be filled by the United Nations and which we are trying to implement and keep in operation.<sup>92</sup>

Truman increasingly came to believe that a triumph of Wilson's ideas was dependent upon an alteration of Wilsonianism. Internationalism had been challenged by the resurgence of militarism, by atavistic nationalism and by the startling stance of another new world order, bolshevism. Truman's complicated and sometimes contradictory challenge was to continue the process by which "old" militaristic and nationalistic ideas would be replaced by free and open ones while, at the same time, bringing a national strategy which included an increase in our military might into the struggle against Soviet imperialism.

If Truman realized the need to focus on the specific outward manifestations of Soviet power, he also believed that we should not focus on those outward manifestations alone. We could not, he believed, understand or predict Soviet foreign policy without also understanding Soviet ideology. Given the great importance he attached to education and his insistence upon the relation between a country's moral-political outlook and its external behavior, this should be no surprise. That ideology, after all, permeated Soviet life. It was the foundation of the education of both the average citizen and the military and political elite. Truman believed it would be silly for the capitalist countries to ignore an ideology which specifically focused *on them*. Soviet leaders, he said, "profess to believe that the conflict between capitalism and communism is irreconcilable, and must eventually be resolved by the triumph of the later."<sup>93</sup> Many documents



of which he would approve would describe convincing the Soviets that this worldview was inaccurate as one of the United States' main goals.

It is true that ideology in and of itself was not an accurate gauge of Soviet foreign policy. Stalin limited his expansionist endeavors according to a "sober assessment of the correlation of forces."<sup>94</sup> He realized the limitations which power placed on the fulfillment of Marxist ideas. He had shown himself unwilling to risk confrontation with the West over Iran, the Montreaux Convention and Trieste. In addition, he had shown restraint in Finland, the repression of which would have caused strong indignation throughout the Western world. Although he had shown his determination to control Eastern Europe and to expand Soviet influence further, he was hesitant to take steps which would risk another war. Truman himself, although taking Soviet ideology seriously, would embrace the Clifford Report's hope that "they will change their mind and work out with us a fair and equitable settlement *when they realize that we are too strong to be beaten and too determined to be frightened.*"<sup>95</sup>

This discrepancy between Soviet ideology which invited war and Soviet foreign policy which generally sought to avoid it causes some to criticize Truman for allowing ideology rather than sheer considerations of power to enter into American foreign relations. They rightly point out that Stalin's incendiary speech of February 9, 1946 should not have been taken by the administration as an accurate description of Stalin's foreign policy, but rather as a Stalinist gambit to rally the people behind the communist cause. And yet, we must ask if focusing on the actual extension of Soviet power *rather than* Soviet ideology would have provided a more accurate picture; for if Stalin's speech did not accurately describe Stalin's foreign policy, Truman could not rule out the possibility that it *did* describe what Stalin would do if he could (i.e., if there were no prevailing counterforce to stop him; i.e., if the power configuration changed such that the risks were minimized and Soviet chances of success were great).

What these critics miss is that if Soviet policies in Iran, Turkey and Yugoslavia showed Soviet restraint in the face of obstacles, they also seemed to Truman to reveal Soviet desires. The ideal end of Soviet foreign policy seemed to be maximum control over a maximum number of people (until that number got too great for control to be possible), just as the ideal end of U.S. foreign policy according to Truman was the maximization of the realm of freedom.

If the fulfillment of Soviet ideology was limited by Western power it was worth knowing what that ideology would lead to *without* those limitations. World War II had confirmed the Wilsonian connection between domestic ideals and foreign policy objectives. Why were our own and Soviet ideals worth focusing on? For Truman, they gave our power a reason to exist; they demonstrated what we were working for and against. As Jared Coffee notes, if one looks at power alone, one loses sight of the radical differences between great regimes.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, if power-relations were it, there would be nothing to stop the United States from using any and all Soviet methods in building power to stop the Soviets. But, in order to maintain the *reason* for their power, Americans

have to maintain limits to this way of thinking—and those limits were ideological ones, having to do with our belief in universal rights.

Soviet-styled Marxism confronted Wilsonian internationalism with an internationalism of its own. As Frank Ninkovich points out, “Now the United States was faced, for the first time, with a Soviet adversary whose outlook was every bit as global as its own. The two ideologies were, in a literal sense, world-views.”<sup>97</sup> Making matters more complicated, as Akira Iriye points out, many American and European intellectuals were beginning to favor a more leftist version of internationalism. Reeling from the cruel nationalism of Germany’s right, the left provided, to some, an appealing alternative. (Many left-leaning European intellectuals fled to the United States after the war. Thousands from the United States went to the Soviet Union to help with the Five Year Plan and its sequel, while many others joined the Moscow-inspired fight against the fascists in Spain.)

One had to wear rose-colored glasses, however, to view Soviet communism as an internationalist panacea or as a counterpoise to nationalism. The Soviet Union after the war can be understood *both* in terms of an ideological internationalism *and* in terms of an atavistic nationalism. As Iriye also observes, “The vibrant and innovative cultural movements that had been evident in post-revolutionary Russia gave way, during the era of Stalinist dictatorship, to xenophobia and geopolitics. To be sure, Moscow’s call for a worldwide anti-fascist front, enunciated at the 1935 Comintern congress, had cultural implications, to bring cultural and intellectual leaders of various countries together against the barbarism of Nazi policies. . . . Unfortunately, this phase of Comintern internationalism did not last. As Robert Tucker has shown, it was superseded by a cultural nationalism that became incorporated into a geopolitically oriented Stalinist policy, eventuating in the Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact of 1939. Intellectual and cultural figures with ties to foreign lands became suspect, and many of them were persecuted simply because they knew too much about the world.”<sup>98</sup>

Indeed, the Soviet State during and after the war had much in common with the German State. In addition to the purge of the Kulak peasantry, the Soviets exacted vengeance on all who had been in contact with non-Soviet ideas. Paul Johnson documents the “extraordinary thoroughness and venom” with which, in 1945–1946, Stalin “destroyed or isolated in camps all those who had been in contact with non-Soviet ideas: not only prisoners of war but serving officers, technicians, journalists and party members whose wartime duties had taken them abroad.”<sup>99</sup> Thus, while Japanese and German militarists made deadly use of nationalism, so too did the Soviets.

There can be no denying that Truman’s position was based on moral outrage as well as geopolitical calculation. The Allies knew and said nothing about the Soviet deportation of eight entire nations in the years 1941 and 1943–1944, though, as Johnson points out, this was a war crime under the definition of genocide later drawn up by the United Nations. They kept quiet about the Soviet oppression of their own people, acquiesced to a Soviet sphere of influence, and

then, for the sake of peace, watched on as the Soviets oppressed the throngs over whom they ruled. For Truman, it was time to draw a line in the sand. Soviet actions were an outrageous affront to the ideals of the United States which, he asserted, were universal ideals—we stood against political oppression and for individual rights.

In his first years as president, then, we have identified tendencies in Truman's thinking which we will continue to recognize. Truman taught Americans that the American democracy and its principles would depend on a skillful foreign policy that acknowledged the importance of military power at the same time as he taught them that that foreign policy should never lose sight of its reason for existence: the American democracy and its principles. At the same time that he resigned himself to the limitations which Soviet power placed on the application of those principles, he would never recognize limitations in the principles themselves. The right to freedom from oppression was universal. No state bore the "right" to conquer another. No person or group in power bore the "right" to enslave others. Nor would he resign himself to a dwindling of the power of the United States and other democracies. Rather, he recognized in the Western democracies the potential for tremendous influence—through unity, the enlightened example of political liberty, economic expansion and military growth.

Moreover, the compelling nature of those principles meant to Truman that the limitations which power placed on the application of them were transitory. Power being always of something and for something, it should ultimately be subordinate to the ideas which make the most sense; for if it serves ideas which are unjust or harmful, the people should eventually make their power serve different ideas. Truman believed that there was so much good sense and sensible goodness in American principles that they would someday knock down the ideological and physical barriers which held them back. On October 27, 1945, Truman asserted regarding the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty for nations and self-government and self-determination for individuals:

It may not be put into effect tomorrow or the next day. But, nonetheless, it is our policy; and we shall seek to achieve it. It may take a long time but it is worth waiting for, and it is worth striving to attain. The Ten Commandments themselves have not yet been universally achieved over these thousands of years. Yet we struggle constantly to achieve them, and in many ways we come closer to them each year. Though we may meet setbacks from time to time, we shall not relent in our efforts to bring the Golden Rule into the international affairs of the world.<sup>100</sup>

## Chapter 7

# Containment with a Wilsonian Twist: Power-Politics and the Democratic Mission Rendered Compatible

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The assistance we gave, which averted stark tragedy and started progress toward recovery in many areas of the world, was in keeping both with the American character and with America's new historic responsibility. To help peoples in distress was not only a tradition of our country but was also essential to our security. By rebuilding Europe and Asia, we would help to establish that healthy economic balance which is essential to the peace of the world. (*Memoirs: Years of Trial and Hope*)

The foreign policy of this country transcends in importance any other question confronting us. (The Truman Doctrine)

Truman's foreign policy from 1947 on increasingly was characterized by the attempt to balance the Soviet sphere in Eastern Europe by creating a free and democratic sphere in Western Europe. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, which are the focus of this chapter, and the decision to move toward the formation of a West German state and the passive response to the Czechoslovakian Coup which are the focus of the next, all indicated the attempt to limit the Soviet sphere while refraining from challenging it directly. By 1947, both the "Long Telegram" and the "Clifford Report" had insisted upon the importance of a psychologically, economically and politically strong and unified Western Europe which, because of its strength and unity, would be impervious to communist domination and to Soviet expansion westward. Between January 1947 and March 1948, the president and Secretary of State George Marshall formulated their strategy of containment and put their plans through Congress.

Although this strategy did not mean that the United States would seek a sphere in the sense of political domination, it nevertheless meant that the United States

would seek a sphere in the sense of political affinity; and the United States would intervene in the affairs of Europe in order to make its influence felt. Even though it had a tradition of avoiding the peacetime power-political struggles of Europe, and of frequent isolationism and recurring internationalism, the United States would commit itself to the recovery of Western Europe while connecting that recovery with its own security. An underlying intention of the European Recovery Program was to create a system of political friends. This intention marked a rejection of isolationism and a qualification of internationalism, and thus points to the activist and yet limited nature of postwar foreign policy.

Why were such policies, in Truman's view, both necessary and right? Because the situation in Eastern Europe was being forcefully determined by the Soviet Union while the situation in Western Europe lingered in precarious abeyance. In addition, local communist parties in France, Czechoslovakia, Italy and Korea were being encouraged to engage in political sabotage and were being indirectly supported in Turkey and Iran. By 1947, observers were speaking of the dangerous combination of economic chaos and political instability. Communist political parties were a viable force in Western European politics, and economic turmoil was thought to enhance their chances of exploiting the economy and polity to their advantage. Intelligence sources predicted that Soviet forces had the capacity to (although it was doubted that they would) push westward to the English Channel. The military position of the United States was, Truman thought, dangerously weak, demobilization having been thorough and rapid. Something had to be done to restore the balance in Europe, both in order to weaken the position of communist political parties in Western Europe and to lessen the possibility of Soviet expansion into Western European states.

In 1945 and 1946, in conferences and speeches, Truman and Byrnes had issued occasional protestations about violations of the Atlantic Charter and the Declaration on Liberated Europe. The enunciation of universalistic principles, although useful for defining the American position, generally had been futile for influencing the Soviet Union. Neither would the U.N. be of much help toward this end except insofar as it was used to mobilize public opinion for, in the Security Council, the Soviet Union could veto any action against it.

Thus, Truman came to adopt a geopolitical approach to the problem of Europe. This might seem to indicate that he abandoned Wilsonianism. However, he did not. Evident in all of Truman's policies were the Wilsonian passion for our democratic mission, the Wilsonian grave sense of our moral-political responsibilities and the Wilsonian optimistic belief in our destiny. Let us turn, then, to a closer examination of the containment years.

Truman agreed with George Kennan's pessimistic outlook regarding current U.S.-Soviet relations. Kennan's "Long Telegram" expressed little confidence in U.S.-Soviet friendship. His pessimism was grounded in his understanding of the Soviet State. The Soviet outlook as put forward by the official propaganda machine was as follows: "USSR still lives in antagonistic capitalistic encirclement with which in the long run there can be no permanent peaceful coexistence."<sup>1</sup>

Kennan rejected as futile Roosevelt's diplomatic means to peaceful relations, but he maintained Roosevelt's belief in the efficacy of power. Indeed, he saw power as the only language the Russians understood and as the only tool which would prevent Soviet expansion. Soviet power, he said, "does not take unnecessary risks." He added, "Impervious to logic of reason, it is highly sensitive to logic of force. For this reason, it can easily withdraw—and usually does—when strong resistance is encountered at any point."<sup>2</sup>

Soviet expansion could be checked, Kennan argued, if the West mustered "cohesion, firmness and vigor" in maintaining a "balance" in its favor. It needn't be checked by direct confrontation, but by building societies which, through strength and self-confidence, would become impervious to Moscow's influence. Because Soviet propaganda stated that *conflicts* between capitalist states "hold out great possibilities for advancement of socialist cause," *cohesion* among capitalist countries was essential: "Every courageous and incisive measure to solve internal problems of our own society, to improve self-confidence, discipline, morale and community spirit of our own people, is worth a diplomatic victory over Moscow worth a thousand diplomatic notes and communiques."<sup>3</sup> Although Kennan would soon modify these views in favor of a more cooperative approach, the policies Truman and the State Department formulated were imbued with the analysis of the Long Telegram.

As he did with Kennan's analysis, Truman tended to agree with Clark Clifford's and George Elsey's analysis of U.S.-Soviet relations as put forth in the "Clifford Memorandum." The Clifford Memorandum, like the Long Telegram, began with the assumption that Soviet leaders had rejected the possibility of an understanding with the West and that they believed war with capitalistic nations to be inevitable. Like Kennan, Clifford and Elsey placed the blame on the impasse in Soviet-American relations entirely on the Soviets. They rejected diplomatic means of dealing with the Soviets because they assumed that the Soviets had done so.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, the rejection of diplomacy can be juxtaposed with Roosevelt's hope that the United States and Russia could maintain a constructive relationship. And yet, Roosevelt's goal of cooperation remained. Because Clifford and Elsey placed the blame for antagonistic relations on the Soviets, they could claim that the "main goal" of U.S. policy was to convince the Soviets that "peaceful co-existence of capitalistic and communistic states is possible."<sup>5</sup> Their simultaneous rejection of compromise as a means and endorsement of some sort of settlement as an end of foreign policy combines Wilsonian and Rooseveltian tendencies in an interesting way. The implication of rejecting compromise with the Russians is, in a sense, Wilsonian for the Wilsonian "concert of nations" was to be a concert of *free* nations and capitalism was viewed as a prerequisite to cooperation. The belief in the possibility of peaceful coexistence between the capitalist and communist world and the tolerance of a Soviet sphere is Rooseveltian for it shows, once again, a willingness to live in a less-than-perfect world and to modify a missionary effusion of principles for the sake of world peace.

The War and State Departments, whose views the Clifford Memorandum reflected, aimed at foreign policy based neither on faith nor on despair, but on concrete preventive steps. The most important preventive device to Soviet aggression was, as in Kennan's analysis, power. Clifford and Elsey wrote, "The language of military power is the only language which disciples of power politics understand."<sup>6</sup> They advocated the deterrent value of atomic weaponry but more especially of a politically, psychologically and economically strong and unified non-Soviet sphere. As did Wilson, they saw economic interaction as a means to harmonious relations: "Trade agreements, loans and technical missions strengthen our ties with friendly nations and are effective demonstrations that capitalism is at least the equal of communism." The United States, they said, should "ensure that economic opportunities, personal freedom, and social equality are made possible in countries outside the Soviet sphere by generous assistance."<sup>7</sup>

Although a Wilsonian desire to spread capitalism is manifest in this endeavor, the explicit goal of the Clifford Memorandum was to *confine* the Soviet sphere rather than to challenge it directly. The United States, it said, "should maintain military forces powerful enough to restrain the Soviet sphere and to confine Soviet influence to its present area." It added that we should be prepared "to join with the British and other Western countries in an attempt to build up a *world of our own* which will pursue its own objectives and will recognize the Soviet orbit as a distinct entity with which conflict is not predestined but with which we cannot pursue common aims."<sup>8</sup>

This, of course, is the difference between the balance which Roosevelt envisioned and that envisioned in the Clifford Report: Roosevelt hoped that the Russian-Western equilibrium would create the basis for the *common* pursuit of world stability. In the Clifford Report, an equilibrium is desired primarily for the negative end of preventing Soviet aggression. This fact also elucidates a difference between Wilsonian tendencies in the Clifford Report and Wilsonianism. Wilson aimed primarily at positive internationalist goals whereas the primary aim in the Clifford Report is the negative end of confining communism. It seems, then, that during the Cold War, the spread of capitalistic democracy was valued more for its usefulness in containing communism than for its promise of a monistic and harmonious world.

Wilson and Truman concurred, however, in their belief in the inherent virtuousness of democracy and its *contagious attraction* to those who were allowed near it. Truman's doubts about democracy's ability to create a harmonious world rested on his doubts about democracy's ability to spread quickly into hostile territory. He did not doubt that democracy was the most peaceable, harmonious and alluring political form.

Hence, containment did, after all, have a positive side. Containment, for Truman, meant both the circumscribing of communism and the protraction of the realm of freedom, peace and justice. In Truman's mind, the building up of the

West, even if a limited policy, would always have a missionary flavor. In an October 2, 1947 letter to his wife, Truman declared:

If I can mobilize the people who believe in a moral world against the Bolshevik materialists, who believe as Henry Wallace does—"that the end justifies the means"—we can win this fight. Treaties, agreements, or a moral code mean nothing to Communists. So we've got to organize the people who do believe in honor and the Golden Rule to win the world back to peace and Christianity.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, that limited policy pointed toward less limited long-term goals. It was hoped that containment would lead not only to an end to Soviet aggression but also, by frustrating the communist cause, eventually to a change in Soviet philosophy and society. The Clifford Report maintained that while "it appears highly improbable that we can persuade the Soviets by conferences alone, to change the character of their philosophy and society":

Our best chances of influencing Soviet leaders consist in making it unmistakably clear that action contrary to our conception of a decent world order will rebound to the disadvantage of the Soviet regime whereas friendly and cooperative action will pay dividends. If this position can be maintained firmly enough and long enough, the logic of it must permeate eventually into the Soviet system.<sup>10</sup>

Truman's ultimate priority was not to make friends in order to enhance the power of the United States but rather to enhance the power of the United States and its friends in order to maximize the realm of political freedom. The distinction is an important one. The contrast between the kind of alliances Truman sought (even later, when he embraced NATO) and those made sheerly for the sake of convenience and power, such as the Nazi-Soviet Pact, could not have been greater. Politics might make strange bedfellows but to Truman there were limits to this way of thinking. We shall see that Truman's involvement with Western Europe was one and the same with the attempt to imbue that part of the world with moderation and tolerance and to strengthen its traditions of political liberty. The realities of power in Europe caused Truman's focus to be limited. Truman would focus on the area up to and not beyond the iron curtain. The limited scope of his containment policies did not, however, indicate a diminution or mitigation of our political ideals.

Further evidence of this lies in the fact that policies designed to forestall further Soviet expansion were accompanied by the recurring idea that the Soviets should not have been allowed to consolidate a sphere in the first place (above). Clifford and Elsey purported that "The Soviet Union was able to flow into the political vacuum of the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Near East, Manchuria and Korea because no other nation was both willing and able to prevent it."<sup>11</sup> Yes, Truman would realize the limitations which the world power configuration, the



sentiments of our citizens and our limited resources placed upon us, but he would accept no philosophy of limitations. Truman's philosophy of government always remained on the level of what we would do if we could. He believed that a philosophy of limitations would ultimately lead to limitations within ourselves. We had, he believed, to "stand for" freedom and democracy everywhere even though our foreign policy clearly could not have "everywhere" as its focus.

The containment period frequently was characterized by the enunciation of universalistic principles and an unwillingness to view the Soviet sphere as legitimate at the same time that it was characterized by the particularistic attempt to create a balance. Concentration on the former verbal aspect of policies leads to an exaggeration of the scope of postwar foreign policy and to a failure to recognize its moderation. Concentration on the geopolitical aspect leads to an exaggeration of the extent to which Truman parted from his predecessors and to an underestimation of his profound sense of moral duty. His unrestrained belief in freedom and justice and his attempt to make the free world secure inspired his policies in Europe. Truman saw those policies as an extension of American traditions at the same time that he recognized that the United States was charting new ground. What we see during this period is what Fraser Harbutt aptly calls "the coming together of the European geopolitical and the American moral-legal arenas."

If we admit that our political ideals (or why we do things) are important (as we must if we want to make sense out of policies), then a focus on Truman's speeches is important. For example, the Truman Doctrine as policy signified the bolstering of a somewhat oppressive right-wing government—the Greek government. The Truman Doctrine as doctrine signified something quite different. In evoking universal principles, it paid homage to political freedom in general—whether from dictatorships of the left or the right. The Truman Doctrine as policy signified aid to a very limited part of the world; as doctrine it held out the promise of aid to everyone threatened by communism. We shall see that the Truman Doctrine is misunderstood if it is seen as an accurate description of policy but that it is *also* misunderstood if it is seen as mere rhetoric designed to disguise Truman's real intentions. Truman's limited policies were never separate from his expansive democratic goals. Showing that Truman held on tightly to Wilsonian principles as he constructed an intricate postwar power structure is an excellent way to demonstrate the inseparability of mission and power in Truman's foreign policy. Let us turn, then, to the Truman Doctrine.

## THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE

By the end of 1946, the administration was further modifying its approach to world affairs according to its assessment of the Soviet-inspired threat. In November, it rid itself of the U.N. Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). In succeeding weeks, it drew up a new relief program, concentrating its assistance in areas where the United States had "special responsibilities and

interests.” Henceforth, extensive economic aid would be withheld from communist countries.<sup>12</sup> In 1947, Truman formulated that policy toward which he had seemed to be moving in 1945 and 1946. The Truman Doctrine calling for aid to Turkey and Greece was a hallmark of the “new” way of thinking.

In mid-February 1947, the British government, struggling to restore its own economic prosperity and stability, notified the State Department that it would have to withdraw all military and economic aid to Greece and all economic assistance to Turkey by March 31. Truman and his advisers resolved to fill the void which England would leave behind. Their resolve to help Turkey and Greece made sense for three reasons: First, Russia had shown aggressive designs in those areas (above). By 1947, reports of Red Army movements along the frontiers had multiplied. In addition, the Soviet Union was indirectly supporting the communist rebels in Greece. In his famous speech defending the decision to aid Turkey and Greece, Truman declared:

Since the war Turkey has sought additional financial assistance from Great Britain and the United States for the purpose of effecting that modernization necessary for the maintenance of its national integrity. That integrity is essential to the preservation of order in the Middle East. . . . The very existence of the Greek state is today threatened by the terrorist activities of several thousand armed men, led by Communists, who defy the government’s authority at a number of points, particularly along the northern boundaries. A Commission appointed by the United Nations Security Council is at present investigating disturbed conditions in northern Greece and alleged border violations along the frontier between Greece on the one hand and Albania on the other.<sup>13</sup>

Given that U.S. policymakers had decided to stop Soviet expansion at Trieste and that Greece and Turkey were considered vital to the security concerns of the United States, it was essential to limit Soviet influence in those areas.

The Truman Doctrine made sense, second, because taking the place of Great Britain was important for mustering cohesion with Western Europe. Given the American internationalist insistence that England denounce its colonialism, which had contributed to the quick decline of British influence and stature, and given such open displays of divergence between the two powers as the “Hopkins Mission,” it was especially important that the United States show solidarity with Great Britain. Aid to Turkey and Greece would bolster the *morale* of non-communist peoples in the West. Truman made explicit the relation between events in Greece and those in Western Europe:

The disappearance of Greece as an independent state would have a profound effect upon those countries in Europe whose people are struggling against great difficulties to maintain their freedoms and their independence while they repair the damages of war. . . . Collapse of free institutions and loss of independence would be disastrous not only for them but for the world. Discouragement and possible failure would quickly be the lot of neighboring peoples striving to maintain their freedom and independence.<sup>14</sup>

If communism and extreme political systems seemed to thrive on despair, then the “mentality” of the people in the non-communist world was extremely important. Providing hope was as important as providing money and arms. Our political tradition had it that the United States was to represent to the rest of the world the possibility of a better way of life. Now, however, the United States could not provide hope merely by displaying the virtues of its own political system. A world besieged with reasons to believe that the extension and preservation of political freedom were chimerical and illusory projects needed *concrete evidence* that those projects were tangible and sensible. Truman asserted: “The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive. The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms.”<sup>15</sup>

The Truman Doctrine made sense, third, because if providing hope in Western Europe was important, causing discouragement to the Soviets was also important. The money and arms which Truman pledged to send to Turkey and Greece were perhaps not as important as their *representation* of the Truman administration’s commitment and resolve. There was reason to doubt whether \$400 million in aid would be enough to ensure the strategic viability of Turkey and Greece. However, given that Truman had to elicit funds from a fiscally conservative Congress, that he was planning soon to ask them for funds to aid all Europe and that anti-Soviet sentiment was, at this time, neither pervasive nor strong, Truman probably couldn’t have asked for much more. He must have hoped that a display of resolve combined with strong words would make the Soviets afraid to defy us. He must have viewed his bargaining power as substantial, since the Soviets had to fear that he would use Soviet aggression as the excuse to give *more* aid and to become *more* involved in Europe. Perhaps he saw a connection between Churchill’s Iron Curtain Speech, which held the ominous possibility of an association of free states, and Soviet withdrawal from Iran. At the time of Churchill’s speech, the Iranian dispute was in the Security Council (above). As Adam Ulam notes, however, on March 16, the Soviet government suddenly reversed its position and announced that all troops would be withdrawn within six weeks.<sup>16</sup> Truman was, then, wise to combine limited aid to Turkey and Greece with strong words.

Truman’s words were, indeed, so strong that there was a partial disparity between the Truman Doctrine viewed as rhetoric and the Truman Doctrine viewed as policy. In his speech, Truman described two “alternative ways of life”:

One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies

upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.<sup>17</sup>

In the most famous part of the speech, Truman pronounced:

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way. I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes.<sup>18</sup>

These words might seem to support Daniel Yergin's contention that the Truman administration's policies were characterized by a globalistic anti-communism. It should be noted, however, that it was not as though Truman was pledging to commit U.S. troops wherever freedom was threatened; his emphasis was, rather, on economic and financial aid. Moreover, the speech was designed to gain acceptance for financial assistance to Turkey and Greece and did not necessarily imply a comprehensive world policy. This was evident when, during the "Spring Crisis" in Czechoslovakia, the United States rendered neither military nor financial assistance (below). The misleading aspect of the Truman Doctrine is also evident in JCS 1769/1, which was submitted one month later. This document emphasized the need to differentiate between "peripheral" and "vital" areas of security in giving financial aid. This meant, it said, that "Western Europe is in the first place as an area of strategic importance to the United States in the event of ideological warfare."<sup>19</sup>

This same document revealed a limited and ironically pragmatic approach to that ideological struggle. (Still, given the opposition of communist internationalism and Wilsonian internationalism [above], it is significant that it did describe an "ideological struggle.") It proposed giving aid not to all Middle Eastern countries but to those which had the military power to aid the United States in case of war. Indeed, it stipulated that "the bulk of United States assistance should be given to nations who are potentially powerful and also potential allies of the U.S."<sup>20</sup> Like the Long Telegram, it emphasized the need to deal with the Soviet threat by mobilizing the moral and material strength of the West.

Although NSC 20/1 of August 1948 would state that a goal of U.S. policy should be to establish autonomous regimes "generally" consistent with "the cultural needs and national aspirations" of the Balkan people, it did not state that U.S. policy should aim at independence for the Balkans because, it said, that would entail war. In regard to other areas of Soviet extension since 1939, it said "these extensions cannot in all cases be said to have been detrimental to international peace and stability and in certain cases it can be considered—that they be entirely accepted for the sake of peace."<sup>21</sup> Although policymakers did view the spread of communism, no matter where, as a negative development, between March 1947 and December 1949, U.S. foreign policy would emphasize Western

Europe and certain strategic areas in the Far East and Middle East. Truman accepted these limitations as necessary but was increasingly frustrated over what he would term an essentially "negative" policy. The broad rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine was not, then, merely rhetoric.

The Truman Doctrine was not an overstatement of what Truman stood for, nor was it an overstatement of what he would commit the United States to do when he could reasonably and peacefully do so. It was, however, an overstatement of what the United States could reasonably and peacefully do. With its limited budget, its limited arms and its hesitantly involved citizenry, Truman realized that the United States could not as a *general policy* "support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures." Americans had had enough war and expected Truman to strengthen the peace. In NSC 20/1 (above), the desire to avoid war is the key factor in the limitation of foreign policy. The limitations which Truman imposed on his foreign policy, just as the limitations which Stalin imposed on his, stemmed from a calculation of risks and a fear of overexpending the United States and its resources. These limitations came in spite of the fervency of ideological goals and did not indicate a lessening of the goals themselves.

If the United States could not be expected to aid everyone everywhere whose freedom was threatened, it could, however, "stand for" freedom everywhere with a new sense of responsibility and commitment—one which recognized the political problems of others as direct problems and concerns of our own. Truman further declared in his Truman Doctrine speech: "We are a people who not only cherish freedom and defend it, if need be, with our lives, but we also recognize the right of other men and other nations to share it. . . . The process of adapting ourselves to the new concept of our world responsibility is naturally a painful one."<sup>22</sup> The Truman Doctrine accurately conveyed the essence of the American political creed: that mankind's right to "freedom" was inalienable; that all men were born with that right; that that right was not something which the "state" could give or take away. The strength in American liberty lay in the fact that it was not a gift from government but rather the *reason* for government; government being designed to protect our liberties, it was not "at liberty" to take them away. An American foreign policy which "stood for" freedom everywhere with renewed commitment and passion was, in Truman's view, a natural result of our belief that the right to freedom is universal, above and beyond particular governments.

This makes especially interesting the fact that Truman sided with countries which were, in his words, "less than perfect." The rightist Greek government was prone to a disregard for human rights and to corruption. Truman was at pains to point out, however, the difference between the imperfections in Greece and those in a totalitarian state:

No government is perfect. One of the chief virtues of a democracy, however, is that its defects are always visible and under democratic processes can be pointed out and cor-

rected. The government of Greece is not perfect. Nevertheless, it represents 85 percent of the members of the Greek Parliament who were chosen in an election last year. Foreign observers considered this election to be a fair expression of the views of the Greek people. The Greek Government has been operating in an atmosphere of chaos and extremism. It has made mistakes. The extension of aid by this country does not mean that the United States condones everything that the Greek Government has done or will do. We have condemned in the past, and we condemn now, extremist measures of the right or the left. We have in the past advised tolerance, and we advise tolerance now.<sup>23</sup>

Truman clearly hoped that an end to the "atmosphere of chaos" would mean an end to the Greek government's transgressions. If extremism thrived on turmoil and misery, military and financial aid from the United States might serve to mitigate both. Truman conveyed the desperate living conditions which the forces of liberation found when they entered the country. He recounted, "As a result of these tragic conditions, a militant minority, exploiting human want and misery, was able to create political chaos which, until now, has made economic recovery impossible." Assistance was, he said, "imperative" if Greece was to survive as a free nation.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, it was not just an independent Greece but a thoroughly democratic Greece which Truman hoped would be the result of his new policy. Greece, he insisted, "must have assistance if it is to become a self-supporting and self-respecting democracy." To ensure a democratic outcome, American influence was to permeate the whole project. "Experienced American administrators, economists and technicians" were to "insure that financial and military aid were used effectively." Truman added, "It is of the utmost importance that we supervise the use of any funds made available to Greece in such a manner that each dollar spent will count toward making Greece self-supporting, and will help to build an economy in which a healthy democracy can flourish."<sup>25</sup> (As Robert Packenham points out, Truman's hopes for Greece were only partially fulfilled. The goal of containing communism was realized while the goal of promoting genuine democracy was not.)<sup>26</sup>

Wilson, who had sought to imbue Europe with American-democratic ideas and practices, at the end of his term lamented the preposterous things being done in Europe in the mere "name" of democracy. Wilson himself was partly to blame. Having been instrumental in setting the Eastern European nationalities "free," he paid little attention to the definition and outcome of their freedom. Truman's European policies showed an attentiveness to details which Wilson's European policies lacked. Through careful supervision and guidance, Truman tried, often successfully, sometimes not, to lead former enemy states and states threatened with revolution or the possibility of revolution toward more moderate, just and stable political forms. An excerpt from Truman's *Memoirs* reveals his "hands-on" approach to the administration of Greek government:

Meanwhile, Dwight P. Griswold, former Governor of Nebraska, whom I had named to be administrator of our aid program in Greece, had arrived there. He was vigorously

starting to build up a staff and to make arrangements for the reception and distribution of aid supplies. The Greek government, however, continued to show itself mostly concerned with military matters. The Greeks wanted equipment, advisers, money to expand its army, and would have given all our aid to the military if we had let them do it. Both Ambassador MacVeigh and Griswold worked steadily to broaden its base and to seek the widest possible support. . . . Thus, even as we undertook to bolster the economy of Greece to help her combat Communist agitation, we were faced with her desire to use our aid to further partisan political rather than national aims. The overriding task that seemed to confront American policy in Europe was to provide an incentive for the Europeans to look at the situation in the broadest possible terms rather than in narrowly nationalistic or even partisan focus.<sup>27</sup>

This approach is what many came to call “Yankee imperialism”: using the United States’ considerable leverage to further its own political (or financial) purposes. In using power to influence the internal politics of other nations, even if that power is used to create consensual politics, we easily violate the principle of consent as it pertains to the relations between one nation and another. At the same time, not exerting influence can mean that leaders are free to violate that principle as it relates to their internal politics. Even worse, it can mean that other nations are free to violate that principle as it relates to internal and external politics by first subjugating, then indoctrinating that nation.

Truman took a step beyond Wilson’s admonition that unless we influenced Europe, Europe would influence us. All of Truman’s policies bespoke the admonition: Unless we influence Europe, someone else will. His sometimes overbearing oversight of Europe might seem to test the principle of consent, but, Truman believed, Soviet oversight would be far more detrimental to that principle.

Truman was less concerned than Wilson that the United States would be negatively influenced by Europe. The body and soul of the United States had, after all, survived two world wars. Wilson justified his departure from Washington’s admonition against entanglements in Europe in terms of Washington’s own goal of avoiding undue European influence. Truman offered no such rationalization. He felt, simply, that new conditions mandated new policies. In his *Memoirs*, he reflected:

I had a very good picture of what a revival of American isolationism would mean for the world. After World War II, it was clear that without American participation there was no power capable of meeting Russia as an equal. If we were to turn our back on the world, such areas as Greece, weakened and divided as a result of the war, would fall into the Soviet orbit without much effort on the part of the Russians. The success of Russia in such areas and our avowed lack of interest would lead to the growth of domestic Communist parties in such European countries as France and Italy, where they were already significant threats. Inaction, withdrawal, “Fortress America” notions could only result in handing to the Russians vast areas of the globe now denied to them. This was the time to align the United States of America clearly on the side, and the head, of the

free world. I knew that George Washington's spirit would be invoked against me, and Henry Clay's and all the other patron saints of the isolationists. But I was convinced that the policy I was about to proclaim was indeed as much required by the conditions of my day as was Washington's by the situation in his era and Monroe's doctrine by the circumstances which he then faced.<sup>28</sup>

The conditions of his day which, Truman believed, clearly warranted new policies were the conditions created by the rise of totalitarian regimes. An interesting aspect of the Truman Doctrine was its principled objection to the totalitarian usurpation of the independence of free nations and its implicit equation of Soviet totalitarianism and fascism:

One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion. This was a fundamental issue in the war with Germany and Japan. We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes.<sup>29</sup>

As in the Clifford Memorandum, in the Truman Doctrine this viewpoint revealed itself as a reason for abandoning diplomacy as a means for dealing with the Soviets. Indicating the futility of the Yalta Agreement, Truman lamented:

The peoples of a number of countries of the world have recently had totalitarian regimes forced upon them against their will. The government of the United States has made frequent protests against coercion and intimidation, in violation of the Yalta agreement, in Poland, Rumania and Bulgaria. I must also state that in a number of other countries there have been similar developments.<sup>30</sup>

There is no reason to see this principled stance as merely a rhetorical ploy. Although policies amounted to recognition of a Soviet sphere, and were, in this sense, Rooseveltian (above), it was in part the objection to that sphere in principle which led to the temporary forsaking of diplomacy and to the adoption of a strategic approach, a tactic Roosevelt would have shunned.

Principled reasons for the disillusionment with diplomacy were connected with geopolitical reasons. In a report issued soon after the Truman Doctrine, the new Secretary of State, George Marshall, indicated this connection. Because the situation in Europe was unstable and because Russia and the United States were vying to influence the political outcome in that area, no agreement was possible, he implied, until the balance of power was restored. Marshall indicated that there was no use dealing with the Soviets so long as the Soviets held all the cards. The attempt to create a balance was designed, however, not only to create a strategic advantage, but also to create a higher victory of freedom over "tyranny".<sup>31</sup>



In the war struggle Europe was in large measure shattered. As a result, a political vacuum was created, and until this vacuum had been filled by the restoration of a healthy European community, it does not appear possible that paper agreements can assure a lasting peace. Agreements between sovereign states are generally the reflection and not the cause of genuine settlements. It is for this reason, I think, that we encountered such complete opposition to almost every proposal the western powers agreed upon. The Soviet Union has recognized the situation in its frank declaration of hostility and opposition to the European Recovery Program. The success of such a program would necessarily mean a balance in which the 16 western nations would have bound their hopes and efforts together, would be rehabilitated strong in forms of government which guarantee true freedom, opportunity to the individual, and protection against the turn of governmental tyranny.

Thus, again, although the policy of bolstering the West and its "periphery" clearly was designed to bolster the United States and to make its political and economic influence felt, it was done with the conviction that only that policy would save Western nations from enslavement to a foreign power and individuals in those nations from enslavement to tyrannical government.

Self-determination *per se* could not have the same allure it had in Wilson's time. Between the wars, the Eastern European nationalities and ethnic groups had sought to "determine" their own destinies by dominating and exploiting others. Although most of these states started the interwar period as democracies, by the early 1930s only Czechoslovakia remained democratic. As the examples of Germany and Japan further showed, self-determination easily became an excuse for aggressive nationalism.

As its continuing anti-colonial stance showed, independent, self-determining states were still an American priority after World War II. Now, however, there had to be a more engaged, precise American foreign policy in order to steer nationalities and nations toward respect for *other* nationalities and nations. The principle of self-determination had to be subordinated to the principle of sovereignty. In other words, it was time for the United States to more actively promote the idea of consent as it related to each nation's internal and external politics. And *this* was best done by promoting the right of individuals to freedom from oppression by their own governments and the right of nations to freedom from domination by outside powers.

The Truman Doctrine was successful as a first step toward bolstering the economic, political and military posture of Turkey and Greece and bolstering the morale of the West. But that same document which was designed to provide hope had the potential to cause despair. By expressing the request for aid in universalistic terms, Truman ran the risk of raising false hopes throughout the world, and disillusionment when those hopes were not met. As did Wilson, Truman described the American mission in such broad terms that the United States could never live up to its promises. Once again, the promise inherent in the newly expansive American foreign policy threatened to damage that very reputation for equitability and magnanimity which made American promises

credible; for wherever the United States did not fulfill its promises, it opened itself to charges of hypocrisy and, even worse, of being no better than the imperialist or the totalitarian powers.

Truman clearly thought it better to set our sights too high and to fall short of our goal than to wallow in the here and now. Had he addressed himself solely to the concern of power, that would have disappointed not only Americans but also Europeans, whose lives had been shaken and shattered by a terrible war. Although it is perhaps true that parts of the speech which implied that the United States would fight communism everywhere should have been removed, its firm indignation at Soviet actions and its implicit equation of Soviet totalitarianism and fascism were brave and important gestures, useful for exposing the dangers of communism and for encouraging Congress to take action.

As did Wilson, Truman saw part of his role as leader as that of educating and informing the people. Instead of pandering to people's opinions, he tried to guide that opinion. Roosevelt had taken a long time in getting the United States into the war, arguing that public opinion was not "ready." He used surprisingly little of his strong powers of persuasion to educate and inform the people regarding what was at stake in the Nazi war. Conversely, Truman took a public and a Congress which were still not quite ready for global commitments and made them ready by emphasizing what was at stake. In a letter to his daughter Margaret describing the Truman Doctrine, Truman reflected:

I knew at Potsdam that there is no difference in police states, call them what you will, Nazi, Fascist, Communist or Argentine Republics. You know there was but one idealistic example of Communism. That is described in the Acts of the Apostles. The attempt of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, *et. al.* to fool the world and the American Crackpots Association represented Jos. Davies, Henry Wallace, Claude Pepper and the actors and artists in immoral Greenwich Village, is just like Hitler's and Mussolini's so-called socialist states. Your Pop had to tell the world just that in polite language.<sup>32</sup>

As Margaret Truman recalled, "By placing the emphasis on the fight between totalitarianism and freedom, Dad was attempting to rally the same emotional commitment that had fired America in the war against Hitler." She added that he did not mention Russia by name, however, because "he was still hoping to avoid a complete break with Russia."<sup>33</sup> The Marshall Plan would lead to that "complete break" which Truman had hitherto sought to avoid.

## THE MARSHALL PLAN

Although more subdued in tone than the Truman Doctrine, the ensuing "Marshall Plan" represented a broadening of its purposes. As Truman recalled, "after two years of substantial though piecemeal emergency assistance, it was apparent that an even larger and more comprehensive program was needed to achieve the rebuilding of the economy of Europe".<sup>34</sup> By the spring of 1947, the insuf-

iciency of previous policies was all too evident. Europe, it appeared to American observers, was in a state of utter physical and emotional exhaustion.<sup>35</sup> The economy lay in a shambles, the polity in turmoil at the end of a long and arduous war. Postwar inflation; devastated bridges, roads and tunnels; shortages of food, supplies and skilled labor; broken commercial ties and ruptured business structures; unemployment, low morale and loss of confidence in the future: All of these problems beset Europe. To compound the situation, the last two winters had been so severe as to stifle communication and transportation, to ruin harvests and to cause a coal shortage. Communists sought to capitalize on the ferment and were making great headway in Italy and France.

Averell Harriman's "Committee" reported that the interest of the United States in Europe could not be measured in economic terms alone:

It is also strategic and political. We all know that we are faced in the world today with two conflicting ideologies. One is a system in which individual rights and liberties are maintained. The opposing system is one where iron discipline by the State ruthlessly stamps out individual liberties and obliterates all opposition. Our position in the world has been based for at least a century on the existence in Europe of a number of strong states committed by tradition and inclination to the democratic concept. . . . If these countries by democratic means do not attain an improvement in their affairs, they may be driven to turn in the opposite direction. Therein lies the strength of the Communist tactic; it wins by default when misery and chaos are great enough. Therefore the countries of Western Europe must be restored to a position where they may retain full faith in the validity of their traditional approaches to world affairs and again exert their full influence and authority in international life.<sup>36</sup>

According to George Bohlen, George Marshall became convinced at the Moscow Conference that Stalin, "looking over Europe, saw that the best way to advance Soviet interests was to let matters drift." Bohlen recalled that "all the way back to Washington, Marshall talked of the importance of finding some initiative to prevent that complete breakdown of Western Europe."<sup>37</sup> Truman put the best minds in his administration to work in search of a way to prevent that breakdown. Truman recalled that he was "looking for some method that would encourage the peoples of Europe to embark upon some joint undertaking that would eventually lead to self help." He felt "that no amount of American aid would lead Europe to lasting recovery unless the nations of Europe themselves could also help cure some of their own ills."<sup>38</sup> (Again, the belief in self-determination was intertwined with the determination to bolster democratic institutions in other states.) Marshall and Truman, Kennan's Policy Planning Staff, Harriman's Committee, and Dean Acheson's Ad-Hoc Committee all worked on the problem.

Intellectuals in the country were pondering the problem as well. An article by Hamilton Fish Armstrong in *Foreign Affairs* is interesting because its logic is similar to that finally adopted by the government. Noting Europe's dire economic situation, Armstrong maintained that Europeans would judge us more

by how much aid we gave than because we were a "citadel of liberty." Although Armstrong conceded that there was an ideological struggle occurring in Europe, he maintained that the outcome of that struggle would depend on whether or not the economy revived and on whether or not the United States helped to revive it. He found plausible the "general belief that many millions of those who turned in protest votes for Communist candidates, and even some of the others, will drift back to Socialist or various liberal parties whenever the economic situation improves and social stability is restored, for that will free them from the compulsion to think about ways of existence instead of ways of life."<sup>39</sup>

Significantly, Armstrong thought the Truman speech to request aid for Turkey and Greece had the right intention but the wrong tone. By couching the request in terms of an ideological struggle, he believed, it invited a struggle between communists and non-communists before we had created conditions conducive to our winning. To create those conditions, said Armstrong, we should not impose our political way of life on the Europeans, for example, by making their adherence to free enterprise a prerequisite for aid; rather, we should help to return them to prosperity while standing as an example to them of the virtues of (our) democracy.

In line with this logic, PPS-1 of March 1947, entitled "Policy with Respect to American Aid to Western Europe," recommended that aid to Europe should be directed

not to the combatting of communism as such but to the restoration of the economic health and vigor of European society. It should aim in other words to combat not communism but the economic maladjustment which makes European society vulnerable to exploitation of any and all totalitarian movements and which Russian communism is now exploiting.<sup>40</sup>

The value of the European Recovery Program would lie "not so much in its direct economic effects . . . as in its psychological and political byproducts." The best way to encourage spiritual and economic health and hence democracy was not political interference but economic aid. Showing that the universalism of the Truman Doctrine was an issue with Truman's own policymakers, PPS-1 clarified the implications of the Truman Doctrine by suggesting that steps be taken to remove the impression "that the Truman Doctrine is a blank check to give economic and military aid to any area in the world where the communists show signs of being successful." It had to be made clear that "the extension of American aid is essentially a question of political economy in the literal sense of the term and that such aid will be considered only in cases where the prospective results bear a satisfactory relationship to the expenditure of American resources and effort."<sup>41</sup> Thus, PPS-1 described the globalism of the Truman Doctrine as misleading and counterproductive.

Truman's policymakers were aware that many Americans saw the Truman Doctrine as offensive to the American character and American traditions. It was

popular neither with the public nor with Congress. It seemed to jump too drastically away from the cautiousness of the isolationists at the same time that it seemed to violate the open spirit of the internationalists. Americans were more likely to accept involvement in the world if there were limits to that involvement. As Charles Mee observes, they were, at that time, more likely to be generous toward the world if they could *feel* generous (i.e., if the humanitarian rather than the ideological or geopolitical aspects of policies were emphasized).<sup>42</sup> We shall see, however, that Truman himself was unwilling to de-emphasize the geopolitical and ideological aspects. He sought, rather, to nudge Americans toward acceptance of those aspects of American involvement in the world.

Truman did, however, allow other policymakers to set the initial tone for the end product of all this thinking: the Marshall Plan. Moreover, he did concur with the major premise of the Marshall Plan: that the Europeans would be more firm in their democratic ideas and convictions if we helped them to help themselves than if we sought to impose our ideology on them. The Marshall Plan called upon the Europeans jointly to devise a plan for reconstruction to which the United States would respond by infusing into Europe the appropriate economic and technological aid. As Truman described it in his *Memoirs*:

What Marshall perceived in the plans which his State Department staff laid before him was the importance of the economic unity of Europe. If the nations of Europe could be induced to develop their own solution to Europe's economic problems, viewed as a whole and tackled cooperatively rather than as separate national problems, United States aid could be more effective and the strength of a recovered Europe would be better sustained. . . . This was our proposal, that the countries of Europe agree on a cooperative plan in order to utilize the full productive resources of the continent, supported by whatever material assistance we could render to make the plan successful.<sup>43</sup>

Although the Marshall Plan did not pass Congress until April 1948 and did not go into effect until the second half of that year, Marshall launched the plan in a June 5, 1947 commencement address at Harvard. In line with the logic of PPS-1, Marshall extenuated the broad rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine. He emphasized not the ideological struggle in Europe but "the dislocation of the entire fabric of European society" as a result of war and Nazi rule:

The breakdown of the business structure of Europe during the war was complete. . . . The town and city industries are not producing adequate goods to exchange with the food-producing farmer. Raw materials and fuel are in short supply. Machinery is lacking or worn out. The farmer or the peasant cannot find the goods for sale which he desires to purchase. So the sale of his farm produce for money which he cannot use seems to him an unprofitable transaction. He, therefore, has withdrawn many fields from crop cultivation and is using them for grazing. . . . Meanwhile people in the cities are short of food and fuel. So the governments are forced to use their foreign money and credits to procure these necessities abroad. This process exhausts funds which are urgently needed for reconstruction.<sup>44</sup>

Marshall spoke of the devastation of Europe, not just of Western Europe. In fact, he held out the prospect of aid to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union even though it was thought to be almost certain that the Soviet Union would not accept nor allow its satellites to accept. Marshall insisted, "Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos."<sup>45</sup> Without our aid, he argued, Europe would face "economic, social and political deterioration of a very grave character." One reason for making the offer of general aid was the desire to avoid the onus of dividing Europe and to put the onus on Russia. This was thought to be important not only for winning public and congressional support, but also for enabling Italy and France to participate in the plan, since, otherwise, communists there would have prevented it.

There were three reasons to believe that Stalin would reject the offer: First, it would expose the satellite states to the benefits of democracy and tie them to the West. Second, given the American insistence that Europeans devise a common plan, the Soviet Union would have had to compromise with its ideological enemies. Third, American supervision would have focused attention on Soviet political methods in the Balkans.

Not surprisingly, at the Paris exploratory meeting of European leaders Molotov insisted that each country *separately* draw up a list of its needs which the United States would then pay for without being able to check that its funds and supplies were being used as intended. The other Europeans rejected these conditions as insulting to the United States and detrimental to overall European reconstruction. Behind the scenes, the Americans pressured the British to see to it that the Russians would find it impossible to accept Marshall's terms. As Charles Mee notes, it became clear to Molotov that "if the idea was to draw up a common economic plan, as Bevin and Bidault seemed to insist, then each country would have to take inventory of its economy, tell all the others what they had, declare what they needed, and allow some central body to set priorities and quotas. Each economy, including the Soviet economy, would in some sense become subject to American planning."<sup>46</sup> The Marshall Plan threatened to destroy the whole Eastern European preference system upon which the recovery of the Soviet system depended.

And yet that very system should have given the Americans pause and made them wonder if the Soviets might participate in the plan in spite of its drawbacks, for the fact that Russia was exploiting the economies of Eastern Europe to rebuild the Soviet economic machine that had been so badly damaged during the war meant there were advantages as well as disadvantages to the Marshall Plan from the Soviet perspective. Economic assistance to those countries would have been to Russia's economic gain. Marshall perhaps did have this in mind, for he seemed to qualify his offer for aid, implying that it would be provided to all European countries without prerequisites *so long as* it was not used for totalitarian purposes:

Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist. . . . Any government which maneuvers to block the recovery of other countries cannot expect help from us. Furthermore, governments, political parties, or groups which seek to perpetuate human misery in order to profit therefrom politically or otherwise will encounter the opposition of the United States.<sup>47</sup>

Who else but Soviet-inspired communists sought to prevent the viability of free institutions in Europe and to profit thereby from human misery and want? Charles Bohlen aptly reflected regarding Marshall's words that they

placed the Communists, once they opposed the plan, in the position of partisans of hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos. From a propaganda point of view, these words were worth a great deal in countries with large Communists parties. Even so, in France there were some severe political strikes against the Marshall Plan. The Communists realized that their chances of taking over governments would be reduced, if not eliminated if the Marshall Plan brought prosperity to Europe.<sup>48</sup>

Truman and his administration realized that if the European Recovery-Program (ERP) succeeded, it would deprive the communists of their main propaganda tools. As Truman noted in a letter to committee chairmen on the situation in Western Europe, "Political groups that hope to profit by unrest and distress are now attempting to capitalize on the grave fears of the French and Italian people that they will not have enough food and fuel to survive the coming winter."<sup>49</sup> The aim of the Marshall Plan, then, was clearly political (as well as humanitarian and economic), even though the best means to political influence was thought to be a policy of minimal interference. There were to be no obvious prerequisites to aid in part because that was the best way to make our political influence appreciated and felt. If we helped the Europeans without attempting to dominate them, the virtues of our political system would, it was believed, become self-evident.

John Lewis Gaddis argued in *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar Foreign Policy* that we did not aim at building a sphere of influence but at "independent centers of power."<sup>50</sup> This assertion needs qualification. In a 1947 article entitled "New Aid for Europe," Percy Bidwell and William Diebold Jr. encapsulated the spirit of the Marshall Plan. They said, "By the Marshall Plan we can help the Europeans be what they want to be, independent and democratic peoples. That also is what we want them to be."<sup>51</sup> The Marshall Plan must be seen as an attempt to create a sphere of political affinity although not of political submission. It created a balance in favor of the United States by creating conditions conducive to its winning the ideological struggle in Western Europe. By calling for European unity and insisting upon a certain degree of American supervision over the use of funds, it set Western Europe apart from the Eastern European bloc and tied Western Europe closely to the American

Republic. Although the Marshall Plan was not couched in terms of an ideological struggle, it clearly was part of it.

Once the Soviets refused to join or to allow their satellites to join in the Recovery Program, the United States could concentrate its efforts on aiding and reviving that area in Europe up to but not beyond the iron curtain. The fact that the prospect of massive aid was held out to Europe and not to all those in need of help was significant. Having learned the lessons which Wilson's expansive ambitions had taught, the Truman administration concentrated its efforts in those areas where they had a reasonable chance of success. With its democratic traditions, its technical know-how and its industrial base, Western Europe was a likely candidate. As Bohlen added to his reflections:

One of the reasons the Marshall Plan worked so well was that the sixteen European countries that joined it contained the necessary qualified personnel skills and institutions. All the United States was doing was injecting a little economic blood into a system that had stopped functioning. Later, aid policy for underdeveloped countries ran into difficulties because the needed skills had not been developed.<sup>52</sup>

Having described the way in which Marshall himself conveyed his plan and having described the Soviet response to the Plan, let us return to Truman. Truman appealed to American hearts in garnering support for the ideas put forth by his Secretary of State. On December 24, 1947, at the lighting of the White House Christmas Tree, quoting Saint Paul, he said:

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. We believe this. We accept it as a basic principle of our lives. The great heart of the American people has been moved to compassion by the needs of those in other lands who are cold and hungry. We have supplied a part of their needs and we shall do more. In this, we are maintaining the American tradition.<sup>53</sup>

The destitution and degeneration of Europe meant that, more than ever, America was the promised land. In an address to an Inter-American conference, Truman reflected:

This western hemisphere of ours is usually referred to as the New World. That it is the New World is clearer today than ever before. The Old World is exhausted, its civilization imperiled. Its people are suffering. They are confused and filled with fears for the future. Their hope must lie in this new world of ours.<sup>54</sup>

It is interesting, and says a lot about Truman, that his rhetoric was not really any less ideological or globalistic after Marshall's speech than it was before. Truman still spoke of freedom versus totalitarianism and was more, not less, explicit about just which totalitarian power the free world had to fear. In spite of the recommendations of his advisers that the political aspect of the Marshall Plan be deemphasized, Truman emphasized the political aspect. This fact is



testimony to the fervency of Truman's beliefs and to the importance he placed on educating the American people regarding those trends in Europe which he believed threatened all Republican government. In an address regarding the food-saving program, Truman indicated that the political aspect was even "more" important than the humanitarian aspect of the program:

I know every American feels in his heart that we must help to prevent starvation and distress among our fellow men in other countries. But more than this, the food-saving program announced tonight offers an opportunity to each of you to make a contribution to the peace. . . . An essential requirement of lasting peace is the restoration of the countries of Western Europe as free and self-supporting democracies.<sup>55</sup>

In a special December 19, 1947 message to Congress on the Marshall Plan, freedom versus totalitarianism was the dominant theme. Truman mentioned the humanitarian and economic reasons for giving aid to Europe. The political reason was, however, the "deepest" reason, one which had to do with our cherished principles and our democratic way of life:

Our deepest concern with European recovery, however, is that it is *essential to the maintenance of the civilization in which the American way of life is rooted*. It is the only assurance of the continued independence and integrity of a group of nations who constitute a bulwark for the principles of freedom, justice and the dignity of the individual. The economic plight in which Europe now finds itself has intensified a political struggle between those who wish to remain free men living under the rule of law and those who would use economic distress as a pretext for the establishment of a totalitarian state. The next few years can determine whether the free countries of Europe will be able to preserve their heritage of freedom. If Europe fails to recover, the people of these countries might be driven to the philosophy of despair—the philosophy which contends that their basic wants can be met only by the surrender of their basic rights to totalitarian control.<sup>56</sup>

In a March 17, 1948 address to Congress, Truman's indictment of the Soviet Union was explicit. So too was the connection between the Marshall Plan and the Soviet "threat."

Since the close of hostilities, the Soviet Union and its agents have destroyed the independence and democratic character of a whole series of nations in Eastern and Central Europe. It is this ruthless course of action, and the clear design to extend it to the remaining free nations of Europe that have brought about the critical situation in Europe today. The tragic death of the Republic of Czechoslovakia has sent a shock throughout the civilized world. Now pressure is being brought to bear in Finland, to the hazard of the entire Scandinavian peninsula. Greece is under direct military attack from rebels actively supported by her Communist dominated neighbors. In Italy, a determined and aggressive effort is being made by a Communist minority to take control of that country. The methods vary, but the pattern is all too clear. Faced with this growing menace, there have been encouraging signs that the free nations of Europe are drawing closer together for their economic well-being and for the common defense of their liberties.<sup>57</sup>

If Truman did not dilute the issues for the sake of public opinion but rather expounded on the issues over and over again in order to *educate* the public, neither did he describe the mission of the United States in narrow terms in order to make that mission palatable. Truman's description of the United States' role in the world was no less expansive after Marshall's speech than it had been before. In an October 24, 1947 radio address, Truman declared:

We are following a definite and clear foreign policy. That policy has been, is now, and shall be to assist free men and free nations to recover from the devastation of war, to stand on their own feet, to help one another, and to contribute their full share to a stable and lasting peace. We follow that policy for the purpose of securing the peace and well-being of the world. It is sheer nonsense to say that we seek dominance over any other nation. We believe in freedom, and we are doing all we can to support free men and free governments throughout the world.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, after the Marshall Plan as before, Truman would accept the Soviet sphere of influence in that he accepted the limitations which geopolitical and political necessity imposed upon him, but he would accept no philosophy of limitations. The narrowness of our focus had to do with necessity. The purpose of that focus, however, had much to do with principle. Truman's policy of aiding Europe had to do with the desires to bolster democracy and to make our own and Europe's freedom secure, to prevent the spread of totalitarianism and, yes, to improve Europe's economy so that it would provide a market for our own.

Once again, our political and economic goals contained within them our humanitarian and peaceable traditions. In working for viable democracies, Truman believed, we were working to improve the lives of others and to improve the world's chances for peace, and vice versa. In working to improve the lives of others and to promote peace, we were working for democracy. In a speech which laid the ground for Marshall's speech, although it received little attention, then Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson revealed the manifold and complex nature of Truman's foreign policy:

Not only do human beings and nations exist in narrow economic margins, but also human dignity, human freedom, and democratic institutions. It is one of the principal aims of our foreign policy today to use our economic and financial resources to widen these margins. It is necessary if we are to preserve our own freedoms and our own democratic institutions. It is necessary for our national security. And it is our duty and our privilege as human beings.<sup>59</sup>

The manifold and complex nature of the Marshall Plan is especially apparent if we examine its ambivalent relationship to Wilsonian internationalism. The European Recovery Program embodied the Wilsonian idea that a generous spirit benefits not only others but also ourselves; exemplary behavior was precisely that which was to lead to power and influence. Truman explained, "We have taken it as a first principle that our interest is bound up with the peace and

economic recovery of the rest of the world. Accordingly, we have worked for all three together—world peace, world economic recovery, and the welfare of our own nation.”<sup>60</sup> It also embodied the Wilsonian idea that we were responsible for the world’s problems, that our duty was to use our power for just ends. Truman, however, did better than Wilson himself in synthesizing these two precepts of Wilsonianism, for the Marshall Plan embodied and invigorated the idea that not only whether we exerted our strength but also the manner in which we exerted our strength would have a decisive impact on future civilization. The beauty of the Marshall Plan lay in the fact that the means were as worthy as the ends.

Wilson’s insistence upon an unselfish and generous foreign policy would indicate a belief that our manner is as important as our strength. And yet, he sometimes exerted strength with little regard to the manner in which it was used. And, he sometimes relied on our “manner” alone to solve manners and attract others, failing to exert our strength when it might have done some good (above). A cornerstone of Truman’s postwar policies was that he usually exerted our strength (economic, political, material) when it had a reasonable chance of achieving our goals, and he did usually keep in mind that unjust means would contradict the goals themselves. The idea that the end justifies the means was, to him, totalitarian (Nazi or Soviet) thinking. Truman warned that “in the field of human liberty, method is all-important. Liberty itself is but a method of conducting our affairs.”<sup>61</sup>

When Truman spoke of “responsibilities” such as the Marshall Plan he spoke not only of the need to act, but also of the need to act properly. In a November 17, 1947 message to Congress on the ERP, Truman expounded:

It is a tribute to the strength of our democracy that we are able to make so great a contribution to the freedom and welfare of other nations and other peoples. This Nation is strong both in material resources and in the spirit of its people. Our economic strength, born of our system of free institutions, has contributed to raising the standard of living the world over. Our moral strength, resulting from our faith in human rights is the inspiration of free men everywhere. I refer to the strength of this Nation with humility, for it is an awe-inspiring truth that the manner in which we exert our strength now, and in the future, will have a decisive effect upon the course of civilization. There is a truth whose significance grows with the experience of each passing day. The American people are becoming more and more deeply aware of their world position. They are learning that great responsibility goes with great power. Our people know that our influence in the world gives us an opportunity—unmatched in history—to conduct ourselves in such a manner that men and women of all the world can move out of the shadows of fear and war and into the light of freedom and peace.<sup>62</sup>

Truman insisted in 1947, as he had earlier, that the practice of United States foreign policy was (and had to be) imbued with democratic principles and that all of the international activities of the United States lead to peace—not war.

We are fighting poverty, hunger and suffering. This leads to peace—not war. We are building toward a world where all nations, large and small alike, may live free from the fear of aggression. This leads to peace—not war. Above all, we are striving to achieve an accord among the peoples of the world based upon the dignity of the individual and the brotherhood of man. This leads to peace—not war.<sup>63</sup>

Truman insisted that we engaged in such policies as the ERP not just because of our goal of a more peaceful and secure world but also because we saw people as “human beings, not just pawns in the game of power politics.” Thus, again, we see the combined realization that the geopolitical configuration in Europe depended upon the well-being of Europeans and, on the other hand, the unwillingness to see the fulfillment of human need as a mere means to political ends. Truman spoke of such policies as the ERP as the natural evolution of our democratic beliefs. He said: “Our people have placed their trust in the Government as the guardian of our democratic ideals and the instrument through which we work for enduring peace. . . . Peace-loving nations can only slow progress toward the attainment of a stable world—in which all peoples are free to work out their destinies in their own way—unless their moral leadership is supported by strength.”<sup>64</sup>

In a clear extension of Wilson’s views regarding America’s democratic mission, Truman would declare that the world’s hopes for peace depended upon “the growth and expansion of freedom and self government.”<sup>65</sup> If there was little hope of all the world becoming democratic, it nevertheless benefited peace to strengthen democracy in as many places as possible. As did Wilson, Truman connected democracy with peace not only because democratic governments are responsible to the people but also because democratic societies are more open. In order for there to be peace, Truman argued, it was necessary for the people of the world “to know each other, that they trade with each other and trust each other, and that they move toward common ideals.” Another requisite of peace was “the free and full exchange of knowledge, ideas and information among the peoples of the earth and maximum freedom in international travel and communication.” Another was “that nations devise their economic and financial policies to support a world economy rather than separate nationalistic economies.”<sup>66</sup>

In another irony of modern American foreign policy, that democratization, which was seen to be so important to the peace of the world and which foretold an open and communicative society, was used to make one society impervious to another. Nevertheless, Truman did not abandon Wilson’s belief in the peaceful and democratic results of a truly open world. Just as democracy led to openness, he believed, openness led to democracy; for truth was our greatest weapon, just as secrecy was totalitarianism’s greatest shield. In order to change Soviet society, Truman believed, we would have somehow to communicate the *truth* about our way of life:

All too often the people who are subject to Communist propaganda do not know Americans or citizens of other free nations as we really are. . . . This represents one of the greatest tasks facing the free nations today. That task is nothing less than to meet false propaganda with truth all around the globe.<sup>67</sup>

On another occasion, he predicted that "As the spirit of freedom and the spirit of truth spread throughout the world, so shall there be understanding and justice among men." On another, he warned with great premonition: "When our educational program breaks down, then we are a fertile field for the 'isms.' Education is the best defense against totalitarianism. It is because we know better that we don't believe in and that we don't have those things."<sup>68</sup>

Openness was usually, in Truman's mind, as in Wilson's, to our political advantage. For this reason, the Truman administration did not pressure Western Europe to cut off trade with Eastern Europe after Eastern Europe refused to participate in the ERP. In fact, the administration encouraged trade between them. Hadley Arkes uses this fact as evidence that Americans were, for now, supporting the economic aspect of the ERP, "making it clear that the question of a political commitment was something they were deferring until later."<sup>69</sup> This fact had no such significance. The political aspect of the ERP was always foremost in the administration's mind. If the Eastern Bloc had agreed to participate in the ERP on American terms, in terms of unity and openness, that in itself would not have been bad from a political standpoint for, in opening Eastern European society to ours, it would have allowed the truth of our political system to speak for itself. The problem was both that the Soviet Union would have benefitted economically from the program and that Congress would never have agreed to a program which benefitted the Soviet Union.

Arkes is mostly correct in arguing that the Marshall Plan was not allowed to thrust aside the values and relationships already considered important by Congress, the administration and the State Department. He points to the "host of specific interests" and values ranging from private trade to Congress desire to control the use of funds to the principles of pluralism and toleration, all of which went into the United States' decision regarding how the ERP would be executed and run.<sup>70</sup> He is incorrect, however, in taking the prevalence of such issues in American debates as evidence that the "American interest (in Europe) in terms of power (it) was never even formulated."<sup>71</sup> What Arkes overlooks is that these values and interests were evoked in the discussion of *how* the ERP would be run and were, in this sense, secondary to the existence of that program. The resolution of these issues allowed the Marshall Plan to exist and to that extent accepted what it stood for to the administration. Thus, Arkes, who insists that what matters is not abstract interest but the definition of interest misses his own point. The important point is that Congress and the State Department found a way to make it work without thrusting American values and traditions aside. Arkes uses the fact that discussions focused on economic growth as further evidence that the political aspects of the ERP were minimal. He overlooks the

repeated connection which was made between economic growth and the hedging of communism. With the advent of the Marshall Plan, the economic was political. Free trade and pluralism contributed to political goals.

The connection between the economic and the political goals of the Marshall Plan was not kept secret from the American people. In an August 22, 1949 address, Truman would expound:

The military assistance program and the European recovery program are part and parcel of the same policy. There is the closest relationship between economic recovery and military defense. On the one hand, economic recovery will lag if the haunting fear of military aggression is widespread. . . . International economic discussions revolve around such prosaic things as tobacco and rubber and rates of interest and the value of currencies. But, behind all these, lie the great objectives of satisfying the material and spiritual needs of mankind and preserving democratic freedom.<sup>72</sup>

Again, it must be emphasized that Truman described congressional and public commitment to the Marshall Plan as political commitments, as clear commitments to liberty and peace. In 1948 as in 1947, he emphasized the point. On March 17, 1948, he insisted regarding the "Plan" that:

We must join our strength with the strength of other free men in the world over who believe as we do in liberty and justice and the justice and the dignity of man. . . . In the present world situation, understanding and agreement among our people strengthen our influence for peace. The bipartisan support of the Marshall Plan in the Congress and throughout the country is compelling evidence of the unity of purpose of our people. . . . The threat to our liberty and to our faith must be faced by each one of us.<sup>73</sup>

To say that the "national interest" in the Marshall Plan had little to do with power is to ignore the emphasis which Truman placed on that issue over and over again and to imply that the people and Congress were oblivious to the president's warnings about the need to defend the free world. Even if most Americans, when surveyed, said that they supported the Marshall Plan primarily for "humanitarian" reasons, this does not mean that they thought the ideological and geopolitical issues were unimportant. Indeed, the Marshall Plan combined humanitarian concerns with power-political concerns to an extent that they had never been combined before. It had to do with the defense of freedom and our own security and at the same time with our concern for our fellow man. It had to do with containing communism at the same time that it encouraged free economic relations between the communist and non-communist world. It had to do with the desire for peace at the same time that it represented a drive for influence. It found a halfway point between the internationalist's zeal for world involvement and the isolationist's fear of involvement. It upheld the inherent value of democracy at the same time that it saw democratization as a geopolitical tool. And, it tried to synthesize a justice of means with a justice of ends.

Most of all, it rendered the terms "idealism" and "realism" for the time being

obsolete; for in the Marshall Plan there was no distinction between doing what was necessary and doing what was right, nor between our national security interests and our democratic principles. The Wilsonian goal of a new world order was, for Truman, not a mere chimera of idealism but rather a viable long-term goal which existed alongside of short-term goals. The allure of our truths and the imperviousness of our strength: These two facets of our foreign policy together were the basis on which Truman perpetuated the Wilsonian dream. Our mission and our power were inextricably combined threads in his scenario. On January 9, 1953, he would ask, "What, then, of the future?" The optimistic answer he gave was this:

As we continue to confound Soviet expectations, as our world grows stronger, more united, more attractive to men on both sides of the iron curtain, then inevitably there will come a time of change within the communist world. . . . (But) if the communist rulers understand they cannot win by war, and if we frustrate their attempts to win by subversion, it is not too much to expect their world to change its character, moderate its aims, become more realistic and less implacable, and recede from the cold war they began. . . . Remember their power has no basis in consent. Remember they are so afraid of the free world's ideas and way of life, they do not dare to let their people know about them. Think of the massive effort they put forth to try to stop our Campaign of Truth from reaching their people with its message of freedom. . . . Surely, a social order at once so insecure and fearful, must ultimately lose its competition with our free society. Provided just one thing . . . that the free world retains the confidence and the determination to outmatch the best our adversary can accomplish and to demonstrate for uncertain millions on both sides of the iron curtain the superiority of the free way of life.<sup>74</sup>

Truman's belief that truth was on our side helps to explain why he insisted, even during the public campaign for the Marshall Plan, on describing the world situation as he saw it, and refused to "tone down" his rhetoric for the sake of public opinion (above). For Wilson, when it came to the Bolsheviks, a key element of our allure lay in precisely that "toning down," in deemphasizing the differences between the Bolsheviks and ourselves and exaggerating the similarities. Although he was increasingly disillusioned with the idea, he hoped it was possible to change the communists through sympathy, good deeds and a display of restraint. He hoped to attract communists by posing internationalism as an alternative to the communist *kind* of anti-imperialism. So long as he believed in this likelihood, he had no reason to adopt their divisive methods. Now, the possibility of changing the Soviets seemed viable only through the long and hard process of containment (a process which, however, had to include the championing and upholding of principles whose truth, or, at least, whose practical advantages, it was hoped, would eventually become evident to the Soviets). Soviet leaders had proven themselves immune to moral suasion and good deeds. Moreover, their aggressive rhetoric and behavior and our own reactive rhetoric and behavior meant that we were on the defensive, a situation which Wilson had warned us to avoid. Thus, Truman came to a conclusion

similar to that which Wilson had come to regarding Germany: "Enlightened" behavior was insufficient for countering the enemy's extremism. We had to counter the enemy's extremism with constructive measures and tough talk of our own. Our example and allure had always to be tied to the undeniable fact of our military, economic and political might and resolve. The stronger the forces of containment, the more apparent the advantages of the democratic way of life. The Marshall Plan epitomized just such a synthesis of mission and power.

If Truman reacted differently than Wilson to the ongoing Bolshevik "revolution," he kept Wilson's view of the cause of such revolutions. As he advocated the Marshall Plan, he made the firm connection (which he had made before) between hunger and poverty and internal and external strife: "Hunger, misery and chaos lead to strife and conquest. Hunger and poverty tempt the strong to prey upon the weak. . . . We are convinced that the best way to prevent future wars is to work for the independence and well-being of all nations."<sup>75</sup> Although there was little hope of soon thwarting communist extremism where it was backed by entrenched Soviet power and where it had already firmly taken hold, there was hope of preventing new revolutions by alleviating the causes of hunger and despair. The Marshall Plan was designed to do just that. It of course went much further in this direction than anything Wilson ever conceived of or imagined.<sup>76</sup>

If Truman made the distinction between those situations which we might prevent and those we could only react to, he also cast doubt, as he had previously, on the notion that democracy in and of itself was a sufficient preventative to poverty, turmoil and subjugation. He had less faith than Wilson that democracy alone would fulfill human needs and that economic interaction and cooperation were enough to create individual prosperity (above). The very need for the Marshall Plan was testimony to his position.

Nevertheless, in its insistence upon the free flow of trade, information and ideas among the members, the ERP was, in a way, a microcosm of Wilson's new world order. Of course, Wilson never envisioned a large economic aid program, believing as he did that economic growth would stem from economic interaction, nor would he have been likely to countenance a program funded by American taxpayers. Still, the Marshall Plan resonated with Wilson's ideas regarding Europe. "Containment" had an inward-looking quality, and yet, its emphasis on cooperation and interaction among European states was an emphasis on a whole new way of conducting affairs. In a June 5, 1949 address in honor of General Marshall, Truman expressed this view:

It is not new for nations to fight together against a common enemy. But it is new for nations to work together, as our nations are working together now, in close economic cooperation to create a better life for their citizens and to build a lasting peace in the world. I believe that, in years to come, we shall look back upon this undertaking as the dividing line between the old era of world affairs and the new—the dividing line between



the old era of national suspicion, economic hostility, and isolationism, and the new era of mutual cooperation to increase the prosperity of people throughout the world.<sup>77</sup>

Indeed, Truman saw the Marshall Plan as a way to reform Europeans by undoing harmful nationalistic tendencies, tendencies which would, he feared, allow the Soviets the opportunity to divide and conquer. In his *Memoirs*, he recalled: "The overriding task that seemed to confront American policy in Europe was to provide an incentive for the Europeans to look at the situation in the broadest possible terms rather than in narrowly nationalistic or even partisan focus."<sup>78</sup>

The Americans pressured the Europeans to do away with "separate shopping lists" and to come up with realistic requests for aid which would benefit not some, but all. In addition, as Charles Mee shows, Americans badgered Europeans to break up cartels, to eliminate tariffs, to integrate their economies and, in general to move toward the concept of Western Europe which the United States had in mind.<sup>79</sup> The Americans and Europeans reached a compromise on this point. The Europeans did not agree to cooperate to the extent the United States envisioned. On the other hand, they cooperated enough to devise a joint plan for their recovery and to start working together toward overall European goals. This eventuality was not simply American-inspired. During and after World War II, various European political and intellectual leaders favored some sort of European unity and formed voluntary organizations to work toward that objective.<sup>80</sup>

The projected unity of Western Europeans, of course, signified a larger disunity—between them and the Soviet world. Truman would later declare that:

Just as our Thirteen Original States found that survival and progress depended on closer association and common effort, so the free nations of the world today must seek their salvation in unity and concerted action. The real strength of the free nations is not to be found in any single country or in any one weapon, but in the combined moral and material strength of the free world as a whole.<sup>81</sup>

In spite of the importance the United States attached to European unity, the United States was willing to accept diversity among the economies and ideologies of Europe, for, as Hadley Arkes shows, alongside of the ideal of unity were the ideals of pluralism and toleration. There was also the ideal of self-determination. Truman believed, however, that self-determination could not mean what it did in Wilson's time (above). After the nationalistic fervor of the fascists, it became clear that nationalism and self-determination were sometimes incompatible. Nationalists were often those who sought to dominate others. Self-determination now had to signify the right to be *free from* other domineering and hostile nations. The right to be *free to* express one's national identity was deemphasized by Truman as he launched the Marshall Plan. Even a self-determination that emphasized self-preservation had to be subordinated to the

cooperation with other states which was now essential. On July 4, 1947, Truman declared:

[Yet] certain nations today are withholding their support of reconstruction plans on the ground that this would mean interference by some nations in the internal affairs of others. This is as fallacious as the refusal of a man to enter a profitable business partnership on the ground that it would involve interference in his private affairs. Surely, after two world wars, nations should have learned the folly of a nationalism so extreme as to block cooperative economic planning among nations for peaceful reconstruction.<sup>82</sup>

The Truman administration did not see its insistence upon the supervision of the use of funds and upon tutelage of the recovery program as *contrary to the* tenet of self-determination; for, policymakers claimed, it was precisely American supervision and guidance which was to help the Europeans to maintain their cohesiveness and freedom and hence to “determine” their own destinies.

Truman described our new relationship with Europe as mutually beneficial, not hierarchical. That relationship was a fulfillment of America’s responsibilities toward Europe. As did Wilson, he described that responsibility as a fact, which it would do no good to ignore. “It is important to recognize that the United States has heavy responsibilities here. The United States is the greatest industrial nation of the world, the leading exporter of agricultural products, and the greatest creditor nation.”<sup>83</sup>

Europe’s great need for the United States’ great wealth and power points to the fact that Truman’s assessment was mostly correct when he described our relationship with Europe as “cooperative.” There was no denying, however, that there was a sense in which Europeans were assuming a position of dependency upon the United States. In a September 4, 1947 letter, George Kennan described England’s relation to ours in terms of dependency:

With many of England’s traditional sources of income lost I think there is for her no satisfactory economic future, in the long run, which does not include (1) a long-term spontaneous flow of private capital from this country to England, and (2) a considerable freedom of labor and population to emigrate from areas in Britain where their presence is no longer economically justified to other continents, particularly our own. In other words, the problem of England’s long-term economic future is one of flexible and fluid adaptation to the economies of this country and Canada.<sup>84</sup>

In an August 14 letter to the Embassy in France, the acting Secretary of State indicated that European nations would simply have to accept their altered status: “We consider that the problem of the leading western European countries is not only to make up for deficiencies caused by the vicissitudes of war, but to adjust themselves to certain basic changes which have occurred and are continuing to occur in their international position.”<sup>85</sup>

Soviet propaganda, of course, already defined the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan as “imperialism.” In a June 11 issue, *Pravda* stated:

More lavish its assistance to its European clientele under becomes behavior of USA towards European powers. State Dept. like firm governess issues instructions on behavior to European powers administering praise and censure dependent on degree of attention to Washington's orders. Lately, for example, Secretary gave full approval of Italian reactions' exclusion from government of representatives of workers' parties. For those powers which don't wish to barter their independence for American dollars State Dept. is not stinting in repressions and threats.<sup>86</sup>

There was an element of truth in the Soviet accusations. The United States had pressured France and Italy to remove communists from their governments, going so far as to hint that such removal was a prerequisite to American aid. As always in history, the goal of independence from aggressor nations, or of massive economic aid, leads to dependence upon nations strong enough or wealthy enough to pose a challenge to that aggression or poverty. Nevertheless, the vast challenge of European ideas and actions to the future U.S. relationship with Europe—from disagreement over the appropriate strategy for the Korean War to de Gaulle's pulling out of NATO, to disagreements over nuclear arms and over technology exchanges with the Soviet Union, to more recent disagreements over missile defense and over environmental issues—points to the inadequacy of the term "dependency" for describing the relationship which Truman initiated with the Europeans. If Europe had to adapt to the concept of Europe which the United States had in mind, so too the United States had to adapt to the idea of the United States' role in Europe which Europeans had in mind.

The Marshall Plan raised questions regarding the future relationship between America's mission and its power. How could our original mission which entailed *restraint* toward the outside world be sustained in a world in which our active involvement—indeed, our sometimes overbearing "leadership"—was a foregone conclusion? Would the need to focus on negative and preventative goals inhibit the perpetuation of America's mission as a positive and uplifting force? Would a mission which now clearly had to do with the relations of each particular nation to each other relate to a mission which was really a universalized domestic policy, having to do with the relation between one democratic nation and all the nations of the world? Was our relationship with Western Europe really compatible with our insistence upon self-determination? Could we really invigorate American principles and methods as we *reacted* to Soviet principles and methods? Or did the fact that we were in a position of responding put all of our traditional principles and methods on the defensive?

The Marshall Plan, in achieving a brilliant synthesis of means and ends and of traditional principles and new policies, managed to hold these questions at bay. Its positive and humanitarian aspects meant that the United States had, for the time being, done what PPS-1 had asked; it had removed the impression "that the United States' approach to world problems is a defensive reaction to communist pressure and that the effort to restore sound economic conditions is only

a by-product of this and not something we should be interested in doing if there were no communist menace.”<sup>87</sup>

Some of the policies which Truman would soon have to adopt would not fit so easily into the liberal-democratic, humanitarian, pacifistic, cautiously internationalist mode. The question was one which Wilson had posed four decades earlier: Would we become more like “them” (in this case, the Soviets) or would they become more like us? If we became somewhat like them, would truth still be on our side? The fact that there was some truth in Soviet allegations about the Truman administration’s attempts to make aid to Europe contingent upon an allegiance to American political beliefs foretold that there were problems to come. We shall see, however, that Truman’s determination that our country continue to espouse, represent and defend the right principles served to mitigate those problems.

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## *Chapter 8*

# The Problematic Moralism of U.S. Foreign Policy: Germany, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia

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This is the United States of America. We are the oldest major democracy on earth. Our democratic values are deep and sound. They cannot be destroyed by a few Communists. We must protect ourselves against communism, but we must not abandon the fundamental ideals of our democracy. To do so would be a surrender to totalitarian doctrines. (Truman, Oklahoma City, September 28, 1948)

Hitler learned that efficiency without justice is a vain thing. Democracy does not work that way. Democracy is a matter of faith—a faith in the soul of man—a faith in human rights. . . . Faith gives value to all things. Without faith, the people perish. (Truman, St. Paul, October 13, 1948)

The Marshall Plan stemmed from the best American political traditions. Although it was underlain by concerns about communism, its negative aspect was overshadowed by its positive purpose. Although it departed from Wilsonianism in its geopolitical insularity and in its advocacy of publicly funded foreign aid, it marked the partial fruition of Wilsonian internationalist goals. It fostered economic interaction and made the connections between democratization and unity, and between cooperation and democracy and peace. It realized the link between European security and prosperity and our own. It actualized our once unfulfilled responsibilities—both as leader of the free world and as caring human beings. In the ERP the practical and the moral were, as Wilson had envisioned they would be, inextricably combined. Obviously, the “shift” to containment cannot be described in terms of the triumph of realism over idealism, nor in terms of the more general distinction between the necessary and the ideal.

The practical-morality or moral-practicality of U.S. foreign policy was, however, rendered problematical by Truman's containment policy, for doing what was deemed necessary to protect our democracy, preserve the peace, create stability and halt Soviet-inspired communism without challenging it directly did not only mean giving technical, financial or military aid to our political friends. It also meant a shift in American policy toward Germany away from an emphasis on punishing former Nazis and toward an emphasis on rebuilding the German State. It meant a passive response to the amoral Soviet oppression of the Czechoslovaks. It meant increased attention to military matters and military might. And, it meant a benign posture toward the Yugoslavs, whose political system was at least as oppressive as the Soviets' but whose appeal lay in their hostility toward the same. (Truman gradually and very reluctantly came to support the governments of Spain and Argentina for the same reasons.)

It wasn't that the end justified the means. Truman always insisted that attention be paid to political methods as well as political purposes. It was, however, that there were requirements which the world situation imposed upon the mission of the United States. If the United States was not justified in adopting the means of its opponent, it nevertheless had to realize that it existed in a less-than-perfect world which imposed upon it less-than-perfect options. Although the United States would not be justified in using any and all means at its disposal in pursuit of its ends, it nevertheless did have to pursue its ends; for if the very ends of liberty, justice, peace and security were lost, the means would be irrelevant and useless. Of course, this reasoning is problematical from both a moral and an intellectual standpoint. It is, however, the reasoning which politicians in pursuit of the "security of the free world" have often adopted. And it leads to problematical policies.

Truman had to decide which was the *best* course at his disposal which, unfortunately, sometimes meant choosing the least offensive course. It was not exactly right to rebuild the former Nazi state so soon after the advent of Nazi atrocities, but letting Germany fall again into economic and political chaos to the detriment and danger of all Europe would have been worse. It was not exactly right to adopt policies which led inevitably to the division of Germany, but allowing Germany to be weak and susceptible to communist rule would have been worse. It was not exactly right to sit by passively while Russia choked Czechoslovakia, but risking another worldwide conflagration over an area which was already "technically" within the Soviet sphere of influence would have been worse. It was not exactly right to countenance Yugoslavia, but forcing Yugoslavia back into the arms of the Soviets to the detriment of the geopolitical balance in Europe would have been worse. So went the thinking within the Truman administration.

The more active the United States became in the world, the more bent on fulfilling its mission, the more difficult that mission became. It was much simpler to "stand for" freedom and peace than to actively pursue them, just as it is easier to love "mankind" than it is to love each person in particular. Much of our

original mission had concerned what we did not do: We did not crush human rights, impinge on the sovereignty of other nations or engage in aggressive wars. Now, however, we had to demonstrate to the world what we *would* do. We were the strongest, the most democratic, the most energetic and one of the most peaceable nations on earth. Merely not doing wrong would in itself have been wrong. We had, as Wilson had admonished, to go out into the world if we were to do right. The challenge was not to do wrong in pursuit of right. The world would notice our transgressions and, if it did not, the Soviets would point them out. Being the world's greatest source of hope, we might also become its greatest source of disillusionment. In every way imaginable, the spotlight was on us.

## GERMANY

As early as September 1946, Byrnes' "Stuttgart Speech" hinted at a reorientation of American policies in Germany: away from a punitive approach and toward an attempt to restore Germany so that it could contribute to the recovery and the strategic viability of Europe. With the advent of the Marshall Plan, that reorientation was complete, for German recovery was essential to the recovery of Western Europe. At the same time, Germany's integration with Western Europe was seen to be important for curbing German extremism—whether of the left or of the right. As Daniel Yergin notes, the Marshall Plan

reduced the tension over German recovery by placing that nation at the center of a Continent-wide effort. Without Germany, it was argued, Europe could never recover, and the Americans made clear to jittery Europeans that success in the Marshall Plan depended upon an economically vital Germany. Aid from the United States would compensate the Western Europeans for the reparations they would not be getting from Germany looking to the West, and so integrated into a western system.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the Americans put more emphasis on raising the level of industry and restoring production in Germany. They put less emphasis on punishing and seeking out former Nazis and more emphasis on bringing as many Germans as possible into the American-inspired endeavor for democracy, economic recovery and growth. Geopolitical considerations hastened the shift from a punitive to a "reintegrative" approach. Underlying the concern for the balance of power in Europe, however, were the desires to procure well-being and peace for Europeans and Americans and to make their freedom and territorial integrity secure. Principle was, then, in a sense, compromised for the sake of principle. Denazification was, ironically, toned down in part for *the sake of* democratization.

Moreover, the belief in the meliorative power of democracy was not toned down at all. It was simply assumed in Washington that democracy was the most beneficial, the most productive and the most just political form. Tony Smith argues that this belief rested upon "conviction," and not upon geopolitical strategizing: "The degree to which Washington decided virtually spontaneously that



the only governmental form which it could wholeheartedly support in Germany and Japan would be democratic is an impressive demonstration of the powerful cultural biases working on American decision-makers, for their conviction existed in good measure independently of any deliberate calculation of historical economic or geostrategic reasoning.”<sup>2</sup> As General George Marshall and General Lucius Clay worked on democratizing Germany and Japan, their clarity and surety of purpose were often evident. (While the focus here is on the occupation of Germany, the Japanese occupation period is equally interesting and important).<sup>3</sup>

Principle was, then, not lost, for although Truman would back away from a punitive emphasis for the sake of reviving Germany, he would not back away from his belief that Germany had to be thoroughly supervised until democracy was not a mere superstructure imposed upon Germans but an entrenched pattern and a way of life. Indeed, reviving Germany was seen to be an essential factor in the entrenchment of that pattern (above). Both the punitive and the reconstructive aspects of American policy in Germany were underlain by the desire to influence the very nature of German society and the very orientation of German politics. In that sense, policies in Germany had common goals from beginning to end. What was new was the goal of making Germany strong and vital enough that it would contribute to the revival of Europe.

Policy statements described the goals of revitalization and denazification as perfectly compatible. An August 26, 1948 Department of State statement stipulated that

The fundamental objective of the United States with respect to Germany is to insure that Germany does not again menace the peace of the world and makes a vital contribution to the economic rehabilitation and political security of Europe. It is desirous, in the words of Secretary Marshall, that “a peaceful Germany with strong democratic roots, take its place in the European and world community of nations.” To achieve this objective, policies have had a twofold aspect, restrictive and constructive, at once designed to prevent the revival of a war potential and the will to war and to promote the rebuilding of Germany as an essential constituent of a peaceful and prosperous Europe. These policies are not viewed as contradictory but as complimentary and related.<sup>4</sup>

Truman tended to describe the reorientation of American policy not only as perfectly compatible with original goals toward Germany but also as stemming naturally from American traditions of magnanimity and decency toward the “vanquished” and the “oppressed.” In a July 19, 1949 speech in Chicago, he said:

The people of the United States have never limited [this] attitude of concern for their fellowmen to the boundaries of our own country. . . . Never before in the history of the world has the victor helped the vanquished as this country helped its enemies after the war ceased. We do this because we think of the people of other countries as human beings, not as pawns in the game of power politics.<sup>5</sup>

Ironically, the Germans, to some extent, had become just that: pawns in the game of power-politics; for although the Truman administration mitigated its efforts at denazification in part because of the American political creed, it also mitigated those efforts in spite of it. True, we were rebuilding Germany for the sake of prosperity, democracy and peace. And, true, we were not ignoring the means for the ends. Democratization could be said to be a non-punitive form of denazification. True, the creed of faith in the "people" compelled America to put more blame on the system than on the people themselves. And, true, in order to defeat the allure of totalitarian systems, we had to be kinder toward our former enemies than they would have been toward us. There was, however, a point not to be overlooked: We were building up former Nazis.

Those same Nazis made it difficult to apply our traditional rationale for "magnanimity in victory," for the people had been willing accomplices in Hitler's war against Jews, Catholics, intellectuals and all Europe. Although the Nazi war machine had, to some extent, depended upon lies, Hitler had not only revealed but had thrived upon a bellicose, prejudiced and spiteful ideology. Was the system, then, really to blame?

If the people, not just the system, were to blame, Truman nevertheless believed that a democratic system would bring out the best in people who had formerly been at their worst. It would satisfy their needs for free and decent lives (the lack of which had made them susceptible to extreme political ideas) and bring moderation and tolerance into their political *weltanschauung*. Was the system, then, in this case, more important than the people themselves? Did our faith in the people now have to do with their behavior within the parameters of democracy? Did democracy, then, begin to take on the nature of a system which controlled the peoples' impulses rather than setting them free? Of course, the founding fathers had molded regulating parameters into our democracy through the ideas of checks and balances and the separation of powers, and through the idea of each person's right to freedom from harm. The emphasis on democratization as a tenet of foreign policy had, however, generally been on liberation and not on control.

The ironic lesson Truman had learned from Wilson's mistakes (above) was that democratization sometimes depended less upon the initial act of "liberation" from an oppressor than upon the supervision and education of the society formerly oppressed. This was only more true if the society itself had seemed to endorse and contribute to the misdeeds of its former rulers.

The need for active American control of the German situation was made all the more evident by the energetic efforts of the Soviets to control the situation. U.S. policy aims as manifest in the meetings of the Allied Control Council after the war had been the pooling of resources between zones and the gradual creation of central administrative agencies which would have pointed toward a unified Germany along democratic lines. However, once it became clear that agreement was impossible on these issues, the United States concentrated not on interfering in the Russian zone of occupation but on strengthening, stabilizing

and unifying the zones of the West. The unification of Germany would require quadripartite agreement. But the Russians would never agree to the creation of a German polity and economy oriented toward the West, and, indeed, were working feverishly to orient Germany toward the communist "East."

The fact that German recovery had come to be seen as essential to the recovery and the strategic viability of Western Europe not only intensified the competition between East and West; it also provided the incentive for the formation of a separate West German state. Let us examine the events which led to this occurrence.

By the time of the Paris Conference, both Byrnes and General Lucius Clay, U.S. Military Governor in Germany, feared that economic collapse would result if the zones of Germany were not economically integrated. According to Clay, Byrnes thereby

made the decision which was to demonstrate clearly the Soviet intent to include Germany, or at least its zone, in its sphere of influence. It was the first evidence that the Western Powers would stand firmly to prevent such an accomplishment and to stop further Communist expansion westward. In carefully phrased language Byrnes expressed the unwillingness of the United States to accept responsibility for the chaotic Germany which had resulted from the four separate zones, and invited each or all of the other occupying powers to combine their zones in economic unity with our zone.<sup>6</sup>

Russia, of course, would not accept the economic fusion of zones because this was seen as a prelude to democracy along Western lines. (What testimony to Wilson's idea!) Conversely, the United States could not allow the economic division between the Western zones to continue because division contributed to the economic chaos which might lead to Soviet totalitarian domination of all Germany.

Some feared that *any* compromise with Russia to maintain four-power (rather than three-power) unity might lead to the same. The United States wanted unity, but a unity based on the free exchange of ideas and goods. Americans feared that any so-called "unity" Russia might agree to would be a guise for the unilateral infiltration of *its* ideas and practices into the West without allowing a reciprocal flow into its zone. Thus, Americans were, from the beginning, as fearful of unity as they were of division. In a March 6, 1946 note to Byrnes, George Kennan had written:

They see in central agencies a possibly indispensable device for entering at an appropriate moment into other three zones and facilitating there accomplishment of Soviet political program. . . . As for future Russian stand on this question, this will depend, in my opinion, mainly on degree to which Russians consider that central administrative agencies would contribute, at any given moment, to the realization of final Soviet program for Germany. Judged from this standpoint, central administrative agencies are plainly two-edged sword, which could cut in either direction, depending on realities of underlying control. Russians, however, are backing the sole authoritarian party in a country used to

authoritarian methods and ill-prepared for democracy. For this reason, they doubtless feel that in the end they cannot lose; that realities of underlying political control will sooner or later be favorable, from their standpoint, to establishment of central agencies.<sup>7</sup>

With these fears in mind—both of division and of a unity which included Russia—America forged its policy. Following the economic fusion of the English and American zones, U.S., French and English representatives met in mid-1948 and decided on the formation of a West German Republic. The Department of State Policy Statement of August 26, 1948 provided a rationale for this decision on a “spheres-of-influence” basis. In light of John Lewis Gaddis’ analysis (above), it is interesting because it makes clear that the decision was founded in the desire to draw Germany into the Western orbit. In light of Daniel Yergin’s analysis (above), this document is interesting for its measured rather than fanatically anti-communist tone. It is interesting for its realization that positive action could not be taken in all of Germany and for its assumption that the Soviet zone should simply be left alone:

US policy must be judged in light of present realities. No ideal solution embracing the whole of Germany is at present possible. German policy is, of necessity, influenced by overriding policy with respect to Western Europe. Such policy dictates that Germany must not be drawn into the Soviet orbit or reconstructed as a political instrument of Soviet policy. It requires that Germany be brought into close association with the democratic states of western Europe and that it be enabled to contribute to and participate in European economic recovery. These objectives clearly cannot be achieved through quadripartite action. Hence it has become necessary to embark on an extensive program of reconstruction in association with the UK, France and the Benelux countries which have a special and immediate concern with western Germany.<sup>8</sup>

Particularistic actions by the United States were in part a response to particularistic actions by the Russians. For example, Clay explains the 1946 decision to halt the flow of reparations from the English and American zones as follows: “The United States and the United Kingdom were pouring food into their zones of Germany whereas the Soviet Government was not only making its zone live on its own resources but in addition was withdrawing huge quantities of raw materials and finished products.”<sup>9</sup> At the Control Council, Clay reminded Marshall Sokolovsky, the head of the Russian occupation, that the Potsdam Protocol had stipulated that there would be an equitable distribution of essential commodities between the several zones, so as to produce a balanced economy throughout Germany and reduce the need for imports. He reported, “While Soviet representatives supported in principle the establishment of central administrative agencies, they did not intend to permit such agencies to break down zonal barriers or to place the resources of east Germany in a common pool unless they were assured of a large share of the productive output of all Germany without payment. They expected that we would finance the deficit and accept continued reparations from production.”<sup>10</sup>

Hadley Arkes points out that the Russian policy on reparations should not, however, have been seen as a sign that Russia favored Germany's division:

It was in the Soviet interest to maintain the Potsdam agreement and continue to receive capital goods from the Western zones. But at the same time as the Russians persisted in a policy of exploitation, they made it far more difficult for Germany to participate in the economy of the Eastern bloc. In addition to removing plants, the Soviets failed to supply raw materials to the factories remaining in Germany, and beyond that, there was a lingering bitterness in Eastern Europe that continued to restrain trade with the Germans. The result was that the Eastern zone became even more dependent on the West and non-Communist countries.<sup>11</sup>

Arkes argues that a break in Germany would not have been necessary if the United States had been willing to accept certain costs (i.e., if it had tolerated Russian reparations policies and, in addition, satisfied Russia's demand for \$10 billion worth of reconstruction aid). He argues against one of the rationales given for the economic merger of the English and American zones on the grounds that self-sufficiency for the zones was not a valid concern under Potsdam.

What Arkes overlooks, however, is that unity *was* a valid concern under Potsdam and that unity was impossible without economic and political interaction. The Soviets consistently opposed economic integration between the zones, whether between their zone and the others, or between the other zones. To them, unity meant the dissemination of democratic ideas and practices. What they did favor was a unilateral flow of reparations and supplies from the other zones to theirs (and, the administration feared, a unilateral flow of political ideas from their zone into ours). The alternative to economic integration was economic chaos, the very stew in which Nazism had fermented.

Although Adam Ulam argues that during the Moscow Conference there were signs that the Soviets were ready to bargain in order to prevent our unilateral policies, perhaps by agreeing to a neutralized Germany in exchange for the desired reparations and Polish boundary, he admits that Moscow still favored the formation of a central government while the United States favored a federal government. It is reasonable to ask, given their antithetical political positions and given the economic and military potential of Germany, how the United States and Russia could have agreed on the form a neutralized Germany would take.

Indeed, antithetical political positions translated into antithetical approaches toward the German people. In *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, John Lewis Gaddis explains,

The Red Army, repeating its practices elsewhere in Eastern Europe, indulged in looting and physical assaults on so massive a scale that the full extent of it is only now becoming known: reparations extractions removed about a third of the Soviet zone's industrial capacity and Russian troops raped as many as *two million* German women in 1945 and 1946. . . . The United States could of course hold out the prospect of economic recovery and the Soviet Union could not: this certainly made the advantages of democracy more

evident than they might otherwise have been. But democratization, under Clay's leadership, was well under way before there was any assurance that Germans would receive Marshall Plan aid or anything comparable. Authoritarianism, which was all Moscow would or could provide, was by far the less attractive alternative.<sup>12</sup>

In describing the Moscow Conference, Clay says:

Again, it was clear that the French, British and Americans favored a federal government under a democratic constitution as democracy is understood in the West, whereas the Russians favored a strong central government under a provisional constitution prepared in an assembly of representatives of "anti-fascist" organizations. Obviously, this would guarantee representation from the Communist party—and would provide a governmental structure lending itself to single-party domination.<sup>13</sup>

Even if the Americans and the Soviets could have agreed on this issue, given the United States' weak military position and the connection between German and European recovery, it was probably not to the United States' advantage to have a disarmed but united Germany. It was preferable from this perspective—Truman's perspective—to have the great military and industrial potential of the Western zones and the Ruhr oriented toward the West. According to Ulam, the military strength of Germany was revived too late to use it to gain concessions from the Soviet Union anyway. Perhaps Truman did not gain "concessions," but at least he did not place all of Germany in a vulnerable position in relation to Eastern Europe. Dean Acheson recalled:

European recovery was only at its beginning. It would not go far without both a sense of security and full German participation in the economic renaissance of Europe. A reunited Germany, bought at the price of military insecurity in Europe, or milked by reparations, or paralyzed politically and economically by Soviet veto power or stultifying Soviet control over East German recovery, would fatally prejudice the future of Europe.<sup>14</sup>

The bizonal and administrative fusion of the English and American zones proved very successful for restoring the German economy, as did the shift from a punitive to a reintegrative approach. Although the formation of a West German state contributed to a divided Europe, it was evident it would become an industrial and perhaps military power and that the Soviet zone could not offset such a power. It was, thus, important for shifting the balance in Europe in favor of the West. Even though we now know that the Czechoslovakian Coup and the Berlin Crisis were partly a response to these unilateral decisions, it was still probably prudent to pursue them.

Although the consequent decision to curtail our denazification policy is significant, it must be put into perspective. As Frank Ninkovich observes, the war and its consequences had already turned the German people away from Nazism: "JCS 1067's harshness was a dead letter from the very beginning, as reality turned out to be more punitive than anything the Americans had imagined.

American and British bombing raids had done enormous damage, reducing cities to ugly ruins, cutting railway lines, roads and bridges." He further shows that stringent measures toward denazification were resented by the Germans, and that Americans had "no taste for forcing people to be democratic."<sup>15</sup> Moreover, denazification, in prohibiting many doctors, teachers and businesspeople who had sympathized with the Nazis from practicing their professions, often conflicted with our effort to stabilize the economy; and economic stability was, of course, thought to facilitate democratization.

The decisions Truman authorized his administration to make in the early days in Germany exemplified the increasing necessity of choosing the best possible or least harmful course. Unlike the decision to fight the Nazis, or to join the U.N. or to aid Western Europe, there seemed, in these decisions, to exist both right and wrong.

The unification and demilitarization which Wilson had viewed as correlating to democracy were, to some extent, sacrificed *for the sake of* democracy. The desire to see democracy take hold in Germany and stay resilient in Western Europe and the desire to orient Germany toward the Western-democratic states led to the division of Germany and the rearmament of the former Nazi state. Democracy for Wilson had been that which would cause the accoutrements of power-politics to slip away. Now, however, the political was geopolitical: That democratization which had been the essential component in the internationalists' vision of an open and harmonious world contributed, in a sense, to discord; to the building up of Western Europe *as opposed to* the East. Germany was to be unified—with the West, and its armaments were to be strictly controlled—by the West. With the formation of a separate West German State, the Wilsonian vision of a world so unified that massive armaments would be obsolete had clearly given way to the Cold War.

If our democratic mission was thereby modified, democracy, that multifarious and nebulous but meaningful and powerful phenomenon, was still a driving force in American foreign policy. In Truman's mind, our engagement in power-politics was for something and about something. A principle-laden speech is worth quoting at some length. It is worth noting that this speech was made in defense of NATO on July 19, 1949, at the height of the Cold War and when geopolitics had finally become an accepted fact in our foreign policy. This treatise against the philosophy of force was made at a time when the United States was intent upon increasing its own and Europe's military power. It spoke for brotherhood at a time when the United States accepted the division of Europe. It admonished against lies, propaganda and deceit at a time when it realized the need for the FBI and the CIA. This was not hypocrisy, although it was judged by some to be so. Instead, it reflected the complicated nature of our new role in the world:

In spite of the record of history, the leaders of some nations today appear still to be relying on force as a method of world organization. Their doctrine calls for the destruc-

tion of free governments through the use of force. . . . It may have temporary triumphs, but in the long run it must either destroy itself, or abandon its attempt to force other nations into its pattern. . . . I believe in the superior attraction for men's minds and hearts of the democratic principles which have been tried and tested in free nations, and which are now winning the allegiance of men throughout the world. . . . The world longs for the kind of tolerance and mutual adjustment which is represented by democratic principles. This country has had a revolutionary effect in the world since it was founded. Our democracy was born in a world of absolute monarchies. The idea which we made a living reality spread throughout the world and brought the day of absolute monarchy to an end. We have always been a challenge to tyranny of any kind. We are such a challenge today. . . . The reason is clear. Our idea of democracy speaks in terms which men can understand. It speaks of opportunity and tolerance and self-government. It speaks of the dignity of the individual, his freedom of conscience and the right to worship as he pleases. It does not exact blind loyalty to false ideas or improbable theories. It does not make a god out of the state, or out of man, or out of any human creation. The world is tired of political fanaticism. It is weary of the lies, propaganda, and hysteria created by dictatorship. It is disgusted by the practice of torture and political assassination. It is sick of the kind of political allegiance which is inspired solely by fear. Men want to live together in peace. They want useful work. They want to feel themselves united in brotherly affection. They want to enjoy that great privilege—a privilege denied to millions throughout the world today—the right to think their own thoughts and to have their own convictions. These desires of mankind are satisfied by the democratic principles which we have put into practice. These principles are at work today as they were in the past.<sup>16</sup>

Why, one might ask, was it not hypocrisy to denounce force, deception and division in the world while embracing a divided Germany, NATO and the CIA? Because these things were at first embraced in a spirit of moderation and caution. Moderation and caution were the key to the consistency in Truman's early foreign policy, because the danger in using the opponent's strategy in fighting the opponent, for example, in using force, is that we will become inured and accustomed to it. The key to preventing that hardening and debasement is to emphasize moderation over and over again. It is one thing to use power; it is another to use it excessively, imprudently or unjustly. It is one thing to favor an intelligence agency; it is another to allow that agency to usurp the control over foreign policy from Congress and the president. It was one thing to accept the *de facto* division of Europe. It would have been another to countenance cruelty just because that cruelty existed on our side. It was one thing to favor preventive rearmament; it would have been another to engage in reckless wars. It was one thing to rebuild the former Nazi state; it would have been another to loosen control over it so that it was permitted to lapse back into extremism or to control it so tightly that Germans were subjected to another extremist government.

It was his measured approach which allowed Truman to chart a new course while generally remaining faithful and devoted to the American tradition, for moderation and practicality were inherent in American political principles



(above). Picking the best possible alternatives or the least offensive course, as Truman tried to do in Germany, although putting a strain on our moral position, did not strain it so much as would the occasional, more arrant adoption of Soviet methods as the administration worked to stop the fulfillment of Soviet goals. (One of the most blatant examples of the latter form of behavior was the releasing of prominent ex-Nazis in order to obtain their help in the Cold War.)

The building up of a nuclear arsenal is, of course, difficult to label as anything other than an "extreme" step. Nuclear weapons defy the word "moderation." Truman saw that step as simply a necessary one, one which would allow the free world to defend itself against nuclear weapons developed by the Soviets and, perhaps, give the free world the edge in the Cold War. The recent opening of Soviet archives and recent disclosures by the American government reveal just how necessary it was. Although our government did not reveal this for fear of ruining its ability to gather information, the 1940s "Venona Project," which decoded Soviet communications with American spies, revealed hundreds of spies, some within all branches of our government, and many working as scientists in our nuclear program. Given his understanding of American responsibility, of Soviet opportunism and of Soviet covert operations, Truman saw no choice but to go forward with the nuclear program. However, John Lewis Gaddis points to evidence that Truman hoped never again to have to consider using nuclear weapons. He further notes that, even though the United States had clear nuclear superiority by the time of the Korean War, Truman never explicitly threatened to use the nuclear arsenal, in Korea or elsewhere.<sup>17</sup>

The circumspect side of early Cold War foreign policy was perhaps nowhere more evident than in Truman's response to the "Berlin Crisis." That response was activist and yet limited rather than expansive or excessive. "The Soviets, expressing the fear that currency reform would lead to the dumping of worthless old marks in their zone and that the formation of West German government would lead to a new Germany army, responded on April 1 with temporary restrictions in military traffic between the Western zones and Berlin."<sup>18</sup> Temporary restrictions soon amounted to a blockade. In a July 3 meeting of the military governors, Sokolovsky indicated the real reason for the blockade. He stated that technical difficulties would continue until we abandoned our plans for a West German government. He didn't discuss the currency issue.

Both the United States and the Soviet Union saw the Berlin Blockade as a test of resolve. Truman was probably correct in viewing the blockade as an attempt to slow Western European recovery by lessening morale. In his *Memoirs*, he explained, "In the face of our launching of the Marshall Plan, the Kremlin tried to mislead the people of Europe into believing that our interest and support would not extend beyond economic matters and that we would back away from any military risks."<sup>19</sup> The Soviets hoped that the United States would exhibit a timidity which would demoralize the West. The Soviet gambit backfired. Truman went on, "I had learned from the negotiations with the intransigent Russian diplomats that there was one way to avoid a third world war, and that

was to lead from strength. We had to reassure ourselves and our allies and, at the same time, deal with the Russians in a manner they would never interpret as weakness.”<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, the United States showed the determination to stay in Berlin and to prevent the Soviet sphere from increasing at the expense of the West. As did the decision to form a West German State, the response to the blockade indicated that American policies toward Germany were part of a larger policy of containment.

Truman’s response was lively but measured. He refused to jeopardize Europe’s future for the sake of avoiding military risk. At the same time, he sought to minimize that risk, taking the risk in the least “risky” way possible. As the blockade became more extreme, the airlift increased. The Western powers also imposed a counterblockade on the movement of goods from western to eastern Germany. In addition, as Charles Bohlen described it, “Early on, the President made a move to show the Soviets that the United States meant business.” In July, he sent sixty B-29 bombers to Britain. At the same time, U.S. policies revealed a remarkable lack of opportunism; the absence of the attempt to use the Berlin Crisis as the excuse to encroach upon the Soviet sphere in Germany. Instead, policies aimed simply at restoring the status quo.

Fear of war underlay American restraint. The recommendations of General Clay and his political adviser Robert Murphy that armed convoys be used to break through the barriers was rejected by the Joint Chiefs. Bohlen explained:

The Joint Chiefs opposed the suggestion, because the Soviets could erect tank barriers to remove bridges and force the United States to make the first hostile move—Senator Vandenberg, supported by Senator Connally, emphatically rejected the idea on the basis that it would make the United States look like the instigator of war. I shared their view. The forcing of the blockade had the attraction of a clear, firm, and courageous decision. But it carried the risk of placing the onus for another world war on us.<sup>21</sup>

What is interesting about this statement is that it rejects the use of military force as a means of breaking the blockade; it does not even discuss the possibility that, if force were used, it might be used to gain control of all Berlin or even to push into eastern Germany.

Indeed, the American response was cautious as well as restrained. Before the airlift, the Department of the Army seriously considered evacuating Americans from Berlin rather than defending our position. Clay successfully argued against this.<sup>22</sup> In May, concerned that the Soviets might not understand American aims, George Kennan asked Ambassador Beddell Smith in Moscow to endeavor to discuss basic problems with Molotov. We wanted to assure him that “most Americans believed in the same foreign policy, which while it opposed the extensions of totalitarian regimes, was nonaggressive.”<sup>23</sup> In June, an argument ensued over whether to ask the Soviets to join in the currency reform. The argument of Bohlen that we should defeated the argument of Clay that we should not. The invitation was proffered, but the Kremlin did not reply. After the airlift

began, Truman made an appeal to Stalin in an effort to end the impasse speedily. In addition, while the three Allied representatives in Moscow presented protests against the imposition of the blockade, they still expressed a willingness to negotiate a settlement of the currency problem. In the fall, the Allies decided to take their case to the U.N. Security Council, where little was accomplished.

These instances of hesitancy and restraint clearly negate Daniel Yergin's assertion that the postwar search for national security was characterized by expansiveness. They also cast doubt on his notion of a "consensus" about the "national security doctrine." The American response to the Berlin Crisis points to the fact that containment was, for the United States, a *new* policy and doctrine—one which U.S. officials were struggling to formulate and define.

When signs that the Soviets were modifying their position finally appeared, Truman and the new Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, aimed simply at a restoration of the status quo. They instructed Philip Jessup, the U.S. representative to the U.N., to sound out Yakov Malik, the Soviet representative, "on the possibility of arranging a settlement which would permit the lifting of the blockade, the ending of the airlift, and the return of Germany, although still divided, to the relative tranquility it had enjoyed since the end of the war."<sup>24</sup> Such an agreement finally was reached at the last meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, in May 1949.

The success of U.S. policies lay in the fact that they kept Berlin divided, not in the expansion of U.S. power. Indeed, the blockade convinced the United States of the urgency of proceeding with the creation of a West German government. Bohlen wrote, "The establishment of the Bonn regime was followed by the creation by the Soviets of a government for East Germany. In this sense, the Berlin Blockade may be said to have deepened and perhaps rendered permanent the division of Germany."<sup>25</sup>

One final point should be made about America's response to the Berlin Crisis. Marshall's formal protest to Russia on July 6, 1948 was neither universalistic nor anti-communist in tone. Rather, it defended America's rights calmly while declaring that "disagreements between the Soviet Government and the Government of the United States in respect to the Berlin situation should be settled through negotiations or other peaceful means."<sup>26</sup>

As in the case of the Marshall Plan, however, Truman's rhetoric was not so restrained! Communism and totalitarianism: These were the issues Truman expounded upon during this period. Although his policies focused upon Soviet imperialism and not upon the inner workings of the Soviet state, although those policies concentrated on Western Europe and certain other strategic areas, Truman did not so limit his concerns. He continued to contrast our idea of government and its reflection in our foreign policy with "theirs." On April 23, 1948, he declared: "The only program we have in view is to obtain peace in the world, if we could get it. We didn't ask for any reparations, or any territory, or any other special privileges, except that all the people in the world should be able to live peaceably together, and prosperously, we hoped."<sup>27</sup> The Russians, on the

other hand, he said, had "no idea of individual rights such as we understand them, nor (did) they have any respect for the life of an individual if it stands in the way of some state project which they think should be for the good of the country." On March 21, 1949, Truman attached democratic symbolism to the situation in Berlin: "The people of Berlin, after years under the rule of Nazi criminals, with their city in ruins, have dedicated themselves anew to the practice of democracy in the very teeth of totalitarian dictatorship. The courage they are displaying in their beleaguered outpost is proof to the world of the democratic spirit."<sup>28</sup>

## CZECHOSLOVAKIA

In *The Life and Death of the Cold War*, Morton Kaplan argues convincingly that the February 1948 Czechoslovakian Coup was the result of a defensive reaction by the Soviet Union to events in the West. Russia saw a danger to its security in the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, bizonal fusion in Germany, the Brussels Pact, and JCS/1067, which revoked the policy of dismantling German industry. The political reliability of Czechoslovakia had decreased as the need for control had increased. Because of its industrial potential, Czechoslovakia was the key European satellite for counteracting the Marshall Plan. Argues Kaplan:

The point to be emphasized is that the coup was not a mere exercise of the power of the Communist Party. That power could have been exercised with greater ease and less risk in 1945 or 1946. It represented a decision based on Soviet estimates of the international situation and of its security requirements in that situation.<sup>29</sup>

Given the importance of Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Union, it is doubtful that economic aid to the regime in power would have prevented a coup, for the communists were in physical control. The Red Army was present in every Eastern European state except Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia had been "liberated" by the Red Army. Its premier was a communist. Its army and its police were under communist leadership. Before the coup, civilian "action squads" were armed by Interior Minister Nosek.

There were, however, options available to Truman. In doing nothing, perhaps in this case, he failed to choose the least offensive course. He might have issued strong statements early on drawing worldwide attention to the communist consolidation of power and illustrating the totalitarian nature of that consolidation. Perhaps, instead of the policy of no food deliveries and no loans *until* there was political change, he might have hinted at the possibility of loans and food deliveries *unless* a new government was forcefully imposed. In other words, he might have used economic leverage not to bolster or punish the current regime but to deter the communists from changing it too drastically. He might also have

hinted at the connection between future communist actions there and the need for a North Atlantic alliance.

Although these measures would have been at best a gamble, they would have been better than nothing. Our moral standing in the world was at stake, for Czechoslovakia was, or perhaps should have been, a special case. This was the state of Jan Masaryk, the state which had come to embody for Woodrow Wilson the creed of self-determination; which had tied self-determination to democratization; which, in World War I and World War II, had put its hope, faith and trust in us. Czechoslovakia had retained a relatively large amount of autonomy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union; but our army had shamefully failed to rescue it from Soviet domination in 1945, the real time to prevent a Czechoslovakian Coup.

After the communists carried out the brutal seizure of power from February 17 to 25, the governments of the United States, Great Britain and France issued a joint declaration noting the course of events which "place in jeopardy the very existence of the principles of liberty to which all democratic nations are attached."<sup>30</sup> They did little more than this. On February 26, Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt encouraged a strong statement by the secretary which might indicate possible suspension of exports to Czechoslovakia or suspension of traffic into or through U.S. zones of occupation in Germany. Steinhardt saw the communist fear of economic chaos as great and saw a possibility that at this early stage they might moderate their position.<sup>31</sup> There was strong evidence that most Czechs opposed the communist government.

Truman and Marshall rejected such proposals, one of the reasons being that a showdown with the Soviet Union would have "the most serious effect on the U.N." Drawing attention to the coup without being able to change it might only, they feared, "create a feeling of frustration among people of this country and in Europe."<sup>32</sup> Truman and Marshall also apparently believed such actions would have little effect in the Soviet Union. A stronger moral stance in this particular instance was sacrificed for what was considered to be an overall good: the regeneration and strengthening of democracy in Western Europe.

The fear of a "showdown" in the U.N. and of "frustration" in Europe points to a new pressure on the United States, which made its moral position difficult. At a time when geopolitics were in the ascendancy, so were concerns about intangible psychological phenomena: "morale," "reputation," "fear," "conviction" and "confidence." That which had to do with the way people "felt" and with how they "felt about us" was of increasing concern to U.S. policymakers. In a world of awakened peoples and heightened expectations, appearances increased in importance. The Soviets played to the world audience with propaganda and false accusations. This put the United States in the position of having to defend its reputation and honor and of having to prove that it was not a meddling, "imperialistic" power. The U.N. was seen as a testing ground for our reputation. As an example, Charles Bohlen reported, regarding U.N. discussions of Berlin:

The debates in the Security Council were not productive. I was irritated by the dissimilarity accorded the two sides. It was almost as though the members of the United Nations recognized and accepted the fact that the Soviet Union was unmoved by any appeal to morality, to public opinion, or to what would be best for the world; therefore the whole attention of the United Nations came down on the side that was movable, the Western democracies.<sup>33</sup>

Truman's determination to achieve our goals by means other than brute force meant that we had to concern ourselves even more with world opinion than the Soviets. Indeed, America's mission had, from the beginning, been conceived as having to do with "demonstration," not coercion. The Marshall Plan was underlain by the assumption that the Europeans would see for themselves the advantages of the American political creed. Truman's foreign policy at the time of the Czechoslovakian Coup can be seen in terms of a difficult balancing act. On the one hand, he had to minimize European fear of the Soviets in order to heighten Western morale and resolve. On the other hand, he had to show that it was the Soviets who were to be feared and not us. Truman and Marshall took a less principled stance than they might otherwise have taken had they not been concerned with those intangibles which might make people intimidated by the Soviets or which might lessen their confidence in the United States. Thus, ironically, the same concern for the people which was dictated by our democratic philosophy led them, in this case, to defend that philosophy less staunchly than they might have done if the people did not have to be taken into account.

In this concern for Western opinion, the opinion of the Czech people was, sadly, disregarded. In postulating reasons for apathy among the Czechs, Ambassador Steinhardt drew the conclusion that they viewed themselves as having been "written off" by the West ever since the war. In an April 30 telegram, he said, "Our attitude at Potsdam on boundaries and reparations and especially the halting of our army in May 1945, thus permitting Soviet forces to liberate Prague, confirmed our stand in the minds of the Czechs."<sup>34</sup> Surely, the apathetic response of the United States to the Czechoslovakian Crisis confirmed our stand in the minds of the Czechs and contributed to their apathy still more. And yet, American policymakers were probably right that economic aid before or economic sanctions after the coup would have made little difference. Czechoslovakia had come to be as important to the Soviet sphere as Germany had become to the recovery of Western Europe.

Truman was still, however, attempting to avoid a hardening or debasement of our moral outlook for the sake of geopolitics. On March 17, he delivered a special message to Congress on the "threat to freedom in Europe." Although he did not focus upon the Czechoslovakian Coup, he did place that coup within the "ruthless pattern" of Soviet behavior in Eastern and Central Europe:

Since the close of hostilities, the Soviet Union and its agents have destroyed the independence and democratic character of a whole series of nations in Eastern and Central

Europe. It is this ruthless course of action and the clear design to extend it to the remaining free nations of Europe, that have brought about the critical situation in Europe today. The tragic death of Czechoslovakia has sent a shock throughout the civilized world. Now pressure is brought to bear in Finland, to the hazard of the entire Scandinavian peninsula. Greece is under direct military attack from rebels actively supported by her Communist dominated neighbors. In Italy, a determined and aggressive effort is being made by a Communist minority to take control of that country. The methods vary, but the pattern is all too clear.<sup>35</sup>

In that same speech, Truman made the connection between recent events and the burgeoning Brussels Pact among Western European nations: "Faced with this growing menace, there have been encouraging signs that the free nations of Europe are drawing closer together for their economic well-being and for the common defense of their liberties."<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the Czechoslovakian Coup and the Berlin Crisis increased the belief in Soviet intransigence and increased the concern for national security. NSC 20/4 of November 23, 1948 stated, "In present circumstances the capabilities of the USSR to threaten U.S. security by the armed forces are dangerous and immediate."<sup>37</sup>

The American response to the Czechoslovakian Coup seemingly fit into the early pattern of refraining from challenging the Soviet sphere directly while building up the power of the West. Czechoslovakia, however, was not a clear part of that sphere at the time of the coup. Moreover, the passivity with which the United States responded was more conspicuous than had been its earlier passivity regarding Soviet activities in the Balkans—more conspicuous because of the promises inherent in the Truman Doctrine, more conspicuous because of the spirit of generosity and caring exhibited in the Marshall Plan and more conspicuous because the coup was a more drastic and blatant step toward subjugating a freedom-loving people than any the Soviet Union had previously taken. The question of whether the United States had, in its response to the Czechoslovakian Coup, chosen the least offensive course or whether its whole approach to Soviet aggression needed to be reevaluated was a question with which Truman would soon have to come to grips.

## YUGOSLAVIA

The case of Yugoslavia is an especially poignant example of the moral dilemmas facing postwar American foreign policy. Although Truman initially viewed Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union as variants of a similar evil, Yugoslavia's separation from the Soviet Union created a peculiar and difficult situation for Truman.

American diplomatic and economic pressure was greater against Yugoslavia than against any other Eastern European state. The Trieste issue (above), Yugoslav assistance to Greek rebels, the shooting down of two American planes which had deviated from their normal course and crossed Yugoslav territory

and the radicalism of Yugoslav communism contributed to American bad feelings. This was a country where businesses, agriculture and "the state" were, respectively, "nationalized," "collectivized," and "centralized," and where political freedoms were crushed. In an April 23, 1948 speech, Truman reserved the same contempt for the Yugoslav style of communist-totalitarianism that he did for the Russian:

I am told that Tito murdered more than four hundred thousand of the opposition in Yugoslavia before he got himself firmly established there as dictator. You know what they did in Bulgaria? They murdered the opposition, from the leaders on down. In Rumania, they have not murdered quite so many of them, but they have sent them to labor camps which amounts to almost exactly the same thing. They have been doing the same thing in eastern Germany. When they took over the eastern end of Poland, they simply cleared out the Poles and pushed them west; and when the Poles marched in eastern Germany, they did the same thing to the Germans. That is a program which we as a country and as a people do not understand at all.<sup>38</sup>

As Morton Kaplan notes, although some revisionists imply that American economic pressure drove Eastern European states closer to the Soviet Union, "the case of Yugoslavia is a real exception to this argument."<sup>39</sup> Yugoslavia succeeded in maintaining its autonomy while deviating from the Soviet path *in spite of* U.S. pressure.

Postwar relations between Yugoslavia and Russia were also tense, although documents indicate that the Stalinist-Titoist split caught the United States by surprise. The Yugoslavs came to realize that the Russians were not interested in the development of Yugoslav industry, but in using Yugoslavia as a base for raw materials and in dominating and exploiting their economy. They resented Stalin's unwillingness to risk confrontation with the West over Trieste. Stalin detected the Yugoslav desire for a degree of independence and tried to prevent it. One probable reason for the formation of the "Cominform" was the hope that it would bind the Yugoslavs to the Soviet Union so that they would be unable to follow an independent path. Stalin also opposed the formation of a Balkan Federation and Yugoslavia's superior relation to Albania, sending threatening letters to Tito regarding that relationship. The seriousness of the situation was confirmed when, in June 28, 1948, the Cominform released a letter condemning Yugoslavia. After that, the Soviet government increasingly cut off trade and contact between Yugoslavia and other members of the Eastern Bloc.

Because the split with Russia caused serious economic difficulties for Yugoslavia, we might expect the United States to have increased economic assistance and trade with that country in order to turn Yugoslavia toward the West. And yet, U.S. policy was circumspect. That circumspection was partly the result of the belief that a non-interfering stance was the best course for aggravating the split and encouraging it to occur elsewhere, and partly the result of Tito's anti-democratic policies. PPS-35 explained:



If the western world now fawns on Tito this will be exploited by Moscow to arouse feelings of disgust and revulsion throughout the international communist movement and among Tito's own followers and to bring Yugoslavia back into the fold. Such a course would also arouse strong, and justifiable criticism in this country. . . . If, on the other hand, the western world is too cold toward Tito—and repulses any advances that may be made by him toward closer association with the west, this will be used by the Moscow communists as proof that foreign communists have no alternative but to stay with Moscow: that discretion only places them at the mercy of the wolves of capitalism.<sup>40</sup>

This policy guide advised “extreme circumspection” which amounted to a middle course. The character of the regime would not preclude the development of normal economic relations; however, Tito should be the one to take the initiative in easing relations. The habit of non-interference in Eastern Europe and the recent tension between the two countries made easing relations difficult.

The advice of this policy directive was followed throughout 1948. The middle course which it recommends reveals two important characteristics of pre-1949 American foreign policy.

First, Truman hesitated to exploit the Russian-Yugoslav split through a sudden change of policies. Although he did welcome the rupture, he used cautious rather than rash means to encourage it. Under Secretary of the Army Draper, Ambassador Cannon and *Chargé Reams* in Yugoslavia and Ambassador Smith in Russia all suggested taking a more positive approach, for example, by indicating our willingness to abolish trade restrictions rather than waiting for Tito to make an overture to us. In a July 21 telegram to the embassy in the Soviet Union, Marshall responded:

We feel that while we should not repulse any advances made by Tito toward closer association with the West, we should await Tito's approaches and should handle such approaches for economic assistance on merits, in light prevailing considerations each case. On basis that policy we have welcomed satisfactory conclusion July 19 of long standing U.S.-Yugos financial negotiations (concerning nationalized American property), we have approved Yugos request to AMG Trieste to purchase certain petroleum supplies. . . .<sup>41</sup>

Second, caution was combined with small steps toward improving relations. For example, Ambassador Smith reminded his government that a Yugoslav official had stated to the *Chargé* that the Yugoslavs were unable to understand why our attitude had not softened during the past six months, since they assumed we would have been aware of increasing tensions between Yugoslavia and the USSR. Smith took this as an indirect overture and indicated his failure to understand why the approach was not received more warmly. Marshall declined to take this as an overture.<sup>42</sup> However, he did telegram the embassy in Yugoslavia that the official should be reminded of our concern for the development of mutually beneficial trade relations as a stimulus to economic recovery and the establishment of world peace, that we had noticed “with interest” Tito's

remarks regarding Yugoslav trade and that we would be pleased "to consider any further comment or suggestions which Yugo authorities may wish to make available in elaboration of Yugo thinking in matter."<sup>43</sup>

Secretary of State Acheson pursued a less cautious approach than Marshall toward improving relations with Yugoslavia in order to aggravate the rupture between Yugoslavia and Russia. In 1949, U.S. policies shifted gradually toward the granting of export licenses for U.S.-Yugoslav trade and the issuing of credit to Yugoslavia. Interestingly, increased contact with the West did not discredit Tito with the Yugoslavs as U.S. officials had feared. The fact that they now feared this dictator would be discredited was significant. Indeed, in spite of a September 1949 Department of State Policy Statement citing Yugoslavia's re-emergence as a democratic, independent member of the world community as a *long-range* objective, the only signs of the attempt to gain concessions in exchange for economic benefits were hints to the Yugoslavs about the undesirability of their support of communists in Greece.<sup>44</sup> The United States had come to view drastically improved relations as desirable even though Yugoslavia was still a strongly communist state.

In a telegram to Acheson on January 31, 1949, Ambassador Cannon made the geopolitical rationale behind U.S. policy explicit. He said:

Distinction is being drawn by recognized Communists between Soviet Union and Communism and this for first time since Soviet's rise to power. Adequately exploited Yugoslav documentation of this distinction with its charges of colonization and its disclosures of extent and method of subordination of needs of other nations to dictates of Soviet military planning may materially alter whole European power relationship.<sup>45</sup>

Although NSC-68 of September 1949 described the eventual formation of non-totalitarian governments as "desirous," the stated goal was not to create capitalist-oriented states, but to "foster heresy among the satellite states, encouraging the emergence of non-Stalinist regimes, even though they be Communist in nature."<sup>46</sup> In other words, "Titoism" was seen as a great possibility for moving the balance of power in Europe toward the advantage of the West. Especially significant was the fact that interfering in the Soviet sphere of influence was now official U.S. policy. "Fostering heresy" among the satellites was advised in 1949 and not in 1948.

These events point to a reorientation in American foreign policy greater than the often-mentioned reorientation of 1946 and 1947. Containment could, more easily in the 1940s than in the 1950s, be viewed as an expansion and evolution of traditional American practices and principles. Albeit in a supremely enhanced role, the United States could still claim to be the harbinger of freedom, the voice of moderation, practicality and restraint, the exemplar of generosity and fair play. Now, however, the entire approach and attitude of American foreign affairs was changing. Yugoslavia was an example of that change.

Truman's increased focus on the balance in Europe allowed him to adopt as

policy the befriending and aiding of a country which was anything but democratic. America's heightened fear of the Soviet Union led him to abandon much of his previous caution in regard to the Soviet sphere of influence; we would attack Soviet influence wherever there was an "opening." We, who had railed over and over again against extremist political philosophies and against communism in particular, would give moral and economic support to one extremist state, a fervently communist state, because that state promised to make things difficult for another.

Did the end now justify the means? Truman never would have said so. In fact, it is too simplistic to depict the case of Yugoslavia in terms of the bolstering of one oppressive communist state for the sake of the undermining of another; for the means Truman chose to enhance U.S.-Yugoslav relations—those of freeing trade and issuing credit—could only, in Truman's mind (given his belief that strong economies and interaction with democracies were spurs to democratization), serve eventually to loosen communism's hold on Yugoslavia. The case of Yugoslavia, however, did not bear remotely the same chances for democratization as Western Europe; moreover, the democratization of Yugoslavia was not a priority of U.S. foreign policy. Questions still remained, therefore, regarding means and ends. The end did not justify the means, but the means sometimes seemed to be lost in the ends, so great was the urgency of those ends. We had an enemy with which we were in a Cold War. Sometimes it seemed that, just as in real war, the normal rules could not apply.

Were we, in involving ourselves to such an extent in Europe, as Wilson had feared, becoming more like the Europeans than they were becoming like us? Many, for example, would consider NATO to be a traditional European alliance, pure and simple. There was no denying the Americanizing influence which the Marshall Plan had in Western Europe and which our occupation policies had in Germany and Japan. But our unique and potent promise to the world, our moralistic image and our democratic mission were facing a great challenge in the day-to-day choices we had to make as a now very involved and very powerful nation, a challenge made greater by the international scope of Soviet propaganda. It was often difficult to decide on the most prudent and principled course. The cases of Germany, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia manifested the difficulty of Truman's position. As the 1940s came to a close, we were building up our former Nazi enemies. We were ignoring our freedom-loving Czechoslovak friends. We were befriending extremist Yugoslav communists. These cases foretold more difficulties to come.

The next decade would witness policies the initiators of which found difficult to describe in glowing terms; the Korean War, the assumption of a protectorate status in Vietnam, the testing of the hydrogen bomb, and a dramatically increased attention to national security, military matters and military might. Were the traditional moral and geographical boundaries of our foreign policy about to dissolve? As for the geographical boundaries, yes. The 1950s were characterized by a globalism hitherto unimagined, even by the internationalists, who

placed more emphasis on the dissemination of democratic ideas and economic practices than on our government's direct involvement in the affairs of others. As for the moral boundaries, one of Truman's main goals would always be to preserve them. Indeed, he was remarkable for the undaunted manner in which he pursued this goal and for the success he often had, in exacting times, in achieving it. Nevertheless, the moral boundaries at times appeared murky and ill-defined, and this was sometimes *because of* Truman's efforts, not in spite of them. The coming decade would raise fundamental questions and doubts about our national identity, questions and doubts we still face today.

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## *Chapter 9*

# The Increasing Disparity between Long-Term Hopes and Short-Term Goals: NSC-68, NATO, Vietnam, Korea and Point Four

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So long as the danger of aggression exists, it is necessary to think in terms of the forces required to prevent it. It is unfortunate that this is true. We cannot, however, achieve our goal of permanent peace by ignoring the difficult and unpleasant tasks that lie in the way. . . . In the face of what has occurred in Greece, and in Berlin, in the face of the threats and pressures to which Iran and Turkey have been exposed, in the light of the suppression of human liberty in countries under communist control, the nations of Western Europe have not been able to ignore the necessity of a military defense for themselves. They have seen what the Soviet Union has done to nations for which it professed friendship and with which it was recently allied. They have observed how a communist coup d'etat, operating in the shadow of the massed military might of the Soviet Union, can overthrow, at one stroke, the democratic liberties and the political independence of a friendly nation. As a consequence of that experience, and in light of the fact that the two most devastating wars in history originated in Europe, they realize that they must have a shield against aggression to shelter their political institutions and the rebirth of their own economic and social life. (Truman, Message to Congress on the Need for a Military Aid Program, July 25, 1949)

Teddy Roosevelt advised us to wield power and influence for a reason: in pursuit of right and honor. Woodrow Wilson, while insisting that our power be used, insisted that it be used for noble ends. Both men reminded Americans that there were more important sides both to our traditions as Americans and to our dignity as human beings than the pursuit of interests. The late 1940s were, in some ways, a realization of these presidential admonishments. Never before in peacetime had Americans used their power so readily in pursuit of democratic goals.

The Marshall Plan achieved, as never before, a synthesis of America's material power and its beneficent purposes.

At the same time that the United States was realizing its power for good, however, it was realizing its limitations. In Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Germany, Truman did not and could not simply apply power to the American mission but rather had to decide which course best served our democratic purposes, even as it compromised them. Our mission was becoming increasingly difficult to define for, now that we really were involved in the world, there was always the question of priorities. Were we, for example, more concerned with halting the spread of Sovietism or with spreading democracy? Were we more concerned with maintaining our opposition to European imperialism or with hastening our cooperation with Europeans? Although such concerns were sometimes compatible, they were not always.

If the United States was realizing its inability to pursue its mission unambiguously and without compromise, it was also realizing the need to pursue its mission more actively: The United States was about to undo many of the limitations which it had previously imposed upon itself in pursuit of the security of the "free world." The Czechoslovakian Coup and the Berlin Crisis had not only increased Truman's belief in Soviet intransigence and increased his concern for our national security; they had also made him impatient with containment. Although he responded to these particular events in a restrained way, he sensed that defensive policies were not enough. Margaret Truman recalled:

Ironically, while the know-nothings in Congress ranted and raved and made some people think that the government was about to collapse from internal subversion, my father was calmly directing a sweeping reappraisal of America's relationship to the communist world. Moreover, he was dissatisfied with a foreign policy which limited itself merely to checking Communist ambitions. This was much too negative and ultimately defeatist for a man who thought as positively as Harry S. Truman. Although few of his biographers have noted it, he specifically rejected the policy of containment. "Our purpose was much broader," he said.<sup>1</sup>

As Margaret Truman put it, Truman's move away from the confines of containment was inspired not just by security concerns, but by his principled dissatisfaction with a "reactive" response to totalitarian misdeeds.

Containment was no longer sufficient, but it was still valuable. It would not be replaced, but expanded upon. Henceforth, containment would seek "by all means short of war" to

(1) block further expansion of Soviet power, (2) expose the falsities of Soviet pretensions, (3) induce a retraction of the Kremlin's control and influence and (4) in general, so foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system so that the Kremlin is brought at least to the point of modifying its behavior to conform to generally accepted international standards.<sup>2</sup>

In order to understand the Truman administration's move toward this much broader definition of containment, let us examine four aspects of Truman's later foreign policy: NSC-68 and the reorientation of American policy; the formation of NATO and the expansion of American military might; the attempt to combine the goals of self-determination, anti-imperialism and anti-communism in Korea, Vietnam and elsewhere, and the initiation of Point Four and the "development" concept. With the emphasis of this study on Truman's and Wilson's ideas and on the United States' evolving relationship with Europe, the purpose of this chapter is not to explore these policies in detail, but rather to find events and ideas which have had a lasting impact on American foreign policy and American thought.

### **NSC-68**

By the summer of 1948, it appeared to policymakers that although the original concept of containment had relied primarily on economic motives to achieve its objectives, military aid would also be necessary. The United States was already providing military assistance on a country-by-country basis to the Philippines, China, Greece and certain countries in Latin America. NSC-14/1, the conclusions of which were approved by Truman, stated that military assistance would bolster the United States as well as the countries to be assisted. It would orient those countries toward us while augmenting our own military potential.<sup>3</sup> NSC-20/4 of November 23, 1948 concluded, "In present circumstances the capabilities of the USSR to threaten U.S. security are dangerous and immediate."<sup>4</sup> Events in 1949 conspired to confirm that threat: As Frank Ninkovich puts it, "In combination, the fall of China and the Soviet A-bomb had an overpowering effect on American foreign policy because they evoked the two primal fears of Wilsonianism: world war and world conquest."<sup>5</sup>

As the war with China had ended, we had concerned ourselves less with the political outcome in China than in Japan. We hoped that if Mao's forces did defeat the Nationalists (who had our lukewarm support), they wouldn't follow the Soviets but, like Yugoslavia, would follow a more independent path. We also hoped that Mao's form of socialism would be more moderate than the Soviet form. By 1950, Mao and his followers had not only defeated the Nationalists; they had become full-fledged communists. On top of this news came the news that the Soviets had detonated an atomic bomb. Most disturbing to our sense of security was the Sino-Soviet Treaty of February 1950. This signaled the willingness of the Chinese communists to collaborate with the Soviet Union. As Ninkovich argues, given the long history of Sino-Russian enmity, this treaty "provided further evidence that communist foreign policies . . . were being defined in terms of ideological antagonism with the West."<sup>6</sup> He adds, "Nationalism did not disappear in the communist bloc, but we also know that internationalist ideology exerted a powerful force of mutual attraction among Marxist countries."<sup>7</sup>



Responding to the reconfiguration of communist power and to the success of communist ideology, NSC-68 of April 14, 1950, the conclusions of which Truman also approved, recommended a quadrupling of America's peacetime expenditures, something Truman had previously sought to avoid. It argued that "the integrity and vitality our system is in greater jeopardy than ever before in our history." It combined the thinking of NSC-14/1 and NSC-68 to conclude that the security of the free world and the security of the United States were, quite simply, synonymous.<sup>8</sup>

NSC-68 is a very interesting document. Often cited as evidence of Truman's new "realism," the document is, in reality, a remarkable statement of the ideological underpinnings of his foreign policy. It attempted to render traditional American principles compatible with America's increasingly geopolitical stance toward the world. It is worth examining.

NSC-68 made clear, first, that the polarization of power which made the defense of the free world imperative was underlain by a polarization of ideas which made it right:

The idea of freedom is the most contagious idea in history, more contagious than the idea of submission to authority. For the health of freedom can not be tolerated in a society which has come under the domination of an individual or group of individuals with a will to absolute power. . . . The antipathy of slavery to freedom explains the iron curtain, the isolation, the autarchy of the society whose end is a permanent and continuous threat to the foundation of the slave society; and it therefore regards as intolerable the continued existence of freedom in the world. What is new, what makes the continuing crisis, is the polarization of power which now inescapably confronts the slave society with the free.<sup>9</sup>

Even though Paul Nitze and most of the other Security Council contributors to NSC-68 did not see Soviet expansion as motivated *primarily* by ideological considerations, but rather by the inability of the "slave society" to tolerate diversity and by traditional Russian paranoia regarding its power, that did not change their belief that communist ideology served and justified Russian expansionism—and that Russian expansionism, in turn, threatened our democratic ideology as well as our security.

NSC-68 made clear, second, that America's ideological and security concerns had now to extend to the entire free world and that its drive to expand freedom had to extend beyond the iron curtain. We had to "take dynamic steps to reduce the power and influence of the Kremlin inside the Soviet Union and other areas under its control."<sup>10</sup> However, the *primary* means toward frustrating Soviet ends, and, ultimately, toward changing the Soviet system, would continue to be containment and the invigoration of the free world:

Thus, we must make ourselves strong, both in the way in which we affirm our values in the conduct of our national life, and in the development of our military and economic strength. We must lead in building a successfully functioning political and economic

system in the free world. It is only by practical affirmation, abroad as well as at home, of our essential values that we can preserve our integrity, in which lies the real frustration of the Kremlin design. But beyond thus affirming our values our policy and actions must be such as to foster a fundamental change in the nature of the Soviet system, a change toward which the frustration of the design is the first and perhaps the most important step.<sup>11</sup>

It made clear, third, that at the same time as we realized moral and practical reasons for making our foreign policy global, we had to realize the limitations which our principles placed on our foreign policy: "The free society is limited in its choice of means to achieve its ends. Compulsion is the negation of freedom, except when it is used to enforce the rights common to all. The resort to force, internally or externally, is therefore a last resort for a free society."<sup>12</sup> We required enough force to protect the free world, but we could use force only in a limited fashion for just ends. Force was not something which we would include in our framework of good government but, rather, something which served that idea. Force couldn't be allowed to override or overwhelm the objectives for which it existed:

For us the role of military power is to serve the national purpose by deterring an attack upon us while *we seek by other means to create an environment in which our free society can flourish*, and by fighting, if necessary, to defend the integrity and vitality of our free society and to defeat any aggressor. The Kremlin uses Soviet military power to back up and serve the Kremlin design. It does not hesitate to use military force aggressively if that course is expedient in the achievement of its design. The differences between our fundamental purpose and the Kremlin design, therefore, are reflected in our respective attitudes toward and use of military force.<sup>13</sup>

The writers of NSC-68 preferred a vastly expanded version of the old demonstration idea to the superfluous use of force. By building up the "moral and material strength of the free world," they hoped to make the idea of freedom irresistible and the expansionist goals of the Soviet Union unattainable:

It is only by developing the moral and material strength of the free world that the Soviet regime will become convinced of the falsity of its assumptions and that preconditions for workable agreements can be created. . . . The idea of slavery can only be overcome by the timely and persistent demonstration of the superiority of the idea of freedom. Military victory would only partially and perhaps temporarily affect the fundamental conflict, for although the ability of the Kremlin to threaten our security might be for a time destroyed, the resurgence of totalitarian forces and the reestablishment of the Soviet system or its equivalent would not be long delayed unless great progress were made in the fundamental conflict. Practical and ideological considerations therefore both impel us to the conclusion that we have no choice but to demonstrate the superiority of the idea of freedom by its constructive application, and to attempt to change the world situation by means short of war in such a way as to frustrate the Kremlin design and hasten the decay of the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup>

The writers of NSC-68 insisted that we revitalize our exemplary status at the same time that they insisted that we engage in an increasingly global cold war and that we expand our military might and our military commitments. Like Wilson, they saw military strength as one part of our power, existing alongside of our moral and material strength. But their emphasis on shifting the balance of power in our favor represented a departure from Wilsonianism. They insisted that military strength was "one of the most important ingredients of power" and that we must "possess superior overall power in ourselves or in dependable combination with other like-minded nations." We needed to achieve that superiority while "holding the door open" to negotiations.

Although NSC-68 emphasized the limitations which American principles imposed upon American conduct, its proposals had to do with the undoing of previous stigmas and the unleashing of power. In *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, John Lewis Gaddis argues that, while previous containment policies sought to block Soviet expansion by a variety of political, economic, psychological and military measures, NSC-68 concentrated on military measures, stressing the need for the United States to be able to respond militarily whenever and wherever aggression took place. Gaddis sees a tragic flaw in NSC-68 in that the means it adopted were broader than the goals themselves and, in this sense, he argues, undermined them:

A military buildup might enhance American security if American interests remained stable, but NSC-68 expanded interests. Fragmentation of the communist world might be a desirable objective, but treating communists everywhere as equally dangerous was no way to achieve it. A more moderate Soviet attitude toward the outside world was certainly to be welcomed, but a negotiating posture that required Soviet capitulation could hardly hasten it. What all of the anomalies reflect is a failure of strategic perception: an inability to relate short-term to long-term considerations, to coordinate actions with interests.<sup>15</sup>

Gaddis further argues, "The whole point of NSC-68 had been to generate additional means with which to defend existing interests. But by neglecting to define those interests apart from the threat to them, the document in effect expanded interests along with means, thereby vitiating its own intended accomplishment."<sup>16</sup>

Although Gaddis' analysis rightly points to the complexity of America's position, it is possible to argue that NSC-68 *did* attempt to define interests "apart from the threat to them" and *did* attempt to render the means, insofar as possible, compatible with our "essential values." If NSC-68 focused on the threat to our existence, it also focused on what made that existence worthwhile. Our interest, NSC-68 asserted over and over again, was in freedom and the democratic way of life. Some of those things which Gaddis sees as "ends" which were undermined by expansive means (i.e., negotiation and fragmentation of the communist world) can also be seen as *means* to the end of a more peaceful, democratic and secure world. And, *this* end could not be achieved until the military and

economic strength and unity of the free world made negotiations worthwhile and appeals to non-Soviet communists legitimate; if NSC-68 rejected negotiations as, for the time being, futile, and if it overestimated Soviet military daring, thereby exaggerating the need for a global military policy, it nevertheless defined peaceful negotiations and the old idea of "demonstrating" the desirability of American "values" as the ultimately desirable way of doing business.

Moreover, NSC-68 rejected three "possible courses": continuation of current policies, isolation and war—in favor of a fourth course: "a rapid buildup of political, economic and military strength in the Free World." This was the only course, it said, which was "consistent with progress toward achieving our fundamental purpose."<sup>17</sup> Again, the emphasis was not on incendiary or hostile actions but on increasing our strength. NSC-68 did say, however (having already said that our "essential values" limited our choice of means), that the end of frustrating the "Kremlin design" was so imperative a part of our democratic cause, that hitherto-unthought-of means might conceivably be used in pursuit of that end without jeopardizing our democratic principles:

The integrity of our system will not be jeopardized by any measures, covert or overt, violent or non-violent, which serve the purposes of frustrating the Kremlin design nor does the necessity for conducting ourselves so as to affirm our values in actions as well as words forbid such measures, provided only they are appropriately calculated to that end and are not so misdirected as to make us enemies of the people instead of the evil men who have enslaved them. . . . If we do not in the application of force demonstrate the nature of our objectives we will, in fact, have compromised from the outset our fundamental purpose.<sup>18</sup>

Still, the emphasis on a global focus which would supplement our main focus in the West and on an expansive military role in the world made the "affirmation of our values" difficult. NSC-68 perhaps devoted so much attention to principles because American policymakers feared, or at least wanted to address the fear, that our principles were threatened not only by the Soviets, but by our own plunge into power-politics. This indeed required justification. Americans had to find a way to maintain their orientation toward peace while working on the hydrogen bomb. They had to find a way to promote democracy and unity while enthralled in policies which were geopolitical and divisive. They had to find a way to accept the moral and practical necessity of linking their destiny with that of others while maintaining their unique ideals and aspirations. Some of the policies Americans were told they had and ought to pursue did not easily "fit" their cherished ideas about America's special mission. Our mission, once it came to mean our actual involvement in the world, might mean an alienating self-righteousness or hubris; on the other hand, it might simply become lost and absorbed into the world in which it now participated.

Complicating matters still further, NSC-68 asserted that the very values which Americans cherished most and which had always been praised for their practical

benefits were now a potential source of weakness. Our openness could mean our susceptibility. Our freedom could mean our moral confusion. Our principle of consent could lead to selfish dissent, our principle of toleration to self-doubt. In a segment worth quoting at length because it illuminates dilemmas that still trouble us today, NSC-68 explained:

The democratic way is harder than the authoritarian way because, in seeking to protect and fulfill the individual, it demands of him understanding, judgment and positive participation in the increasingly complex and exacting problems of the modern world. It demands that he exercise discrimination: that while pursuing through free inquiry the search for truth he knows when he should commit an act of faith; that he distinguish between the necessity for tolerance and the necessity for just suppression. A free society is vulnerable in that it is easy for people to lapse into excesses—the excesses of a permanently open mind wistfully waiting for evidence that evil design may become noble purpose, the excess of faith becoming prejudice, the excess of tolerance degenerating into indulgence of conspiracy and the excess of resorting to suppression when more moderate measures are not only more appropriate but more effective. In coping with dictatorial governments acting in secrecy and with speed, we are also vulnerable in that the democratic process necessarily operates in the open and at a deliberate tempo. Weaknesses in our situation are readily apparent and subject to immediate exploitation. . . . The very virtues of our system likewise handicap us in certain respects in our relations with our allies. While it is a general source of strength to us that our relations with our allies are conducted on a basis of persuasion and consent rather than compulsion and capitulation, it is also evident that dissent among us can become a vulnerability.

The Soviet desire to capitalize on our vulnerability was of primary concern:

Every institution of our society is an instrument which is sought to stultify and turn against our purposes. Those that touch most closely our material and moral strength are obviously the prime targets, labor unions, civic enterprises, schools, churches, and all media for influencing opinion. The effort is not so much to make them serve obvious Soviet ends as to prevent them from serving our ends, and thus to make them sources of confusion in our economy, our culture and our body politic. The doubts and diversities that in terms of our values are part of the merit of a free system, the weaknesses and the problems that are peculiar to it, the rights and privileges that free men enjoy, and the disorganization and destruction left in the wake of the last attack on our freedoms all are but opportunities for the Kremlin to do its evil work.<sup>19</sup>

A society which so valued the individual found itself afraid that the individual would be unable to maintain traditional moral boundaries now that the traditional geopolitical boundaries were being knocked down, and vice versa. A society which had previously taken its geopolitical insularity for granted now feared that its emphasis on tolerance could lead to the compromising of its national security. Did NSC-68, then, exhibit a “paranoia” regarding American vulnerability to Soviet ideas and, if not to the ideas themselves, to the idea that those ideas were benign? This presumption would be valid except for what we now

know about leftist plans and activities in the United States at the time. Recently revealed documents disclose that the Soviets and their willing American sympathizers had a clear plan for American society: By placing leftists in positions of power in schools, universities, think tanks and government offices they would "change the culture." This, in turn, would make America vulnerable to more radical change.

Recently revealed papers also disclose that McCarthy focused his suspicions mostly on the wrong individuals and organizations. Moreover, as Akira Iriye points out, during the heyday of McCarthyism, many internationalist groups, such as the Institute for Pacific Relations, came under attack for allegedly subordinating national to international interests. Iriye also points out, however, that "compared with the Soviet Union, the United States remained far more cosmopolitan," even during the height of the Cold War: "The United States liberalized its immigration policy, admitted a large number of refugee intellectuals, and invited foreign artists and scholars to travel freely inside the country."<sup>20</sup>

A goal of NSC-68 was to make American and Allied countries so strong militarily, the United States government so popular internally, and the American people so united behind a common purpose with each other and with other free peoples that the vulnerabilities which stemmed from their openness were minimized. NSC-68 warned:

A democracy can compensate for its natural vulnerability only if it maintains clearly superior overall power in its most inclusive sense. . . . Like our own capabilities, those of the rest of the free world exceed the capabilities of the Soviet system. Like our own they are far from being effectively mobilized and employed in the struggle against the Kremlin design. This is so because the rest of the free world lacks a sense of unity, confidence and common purpose. This is true in even the most homogeneous and advanced segment of the free world—Western Europe. As we ourselves demonstrate power, confidence and a sense of moral and political direction, so those same qualities will be evoked in Western Europe.<sup>21</sup>

## NATO

The joining of NATO in 1949 was an important step in the drive to diminish that vulnerability. It was a watershed in American history. For the first time, the United States was to become part of a peacetime "alliance." Just as NSC-68 embraced the political and psychological aspects of containment at the same time that it held that those aspects were no longer enough, so too did NATO: A military alliance would heighten the wall against Soviet aggression and create a favorable geopolitical balance. It would increase Western resolve and restore European confidence. It would serve the purpose not only of preventing Europe from being intruded upon by the Soviets, but also of preventing Europeans from *drifting toward* the Soviets. It was to present definition, firmness and unity to

an area that was susceptible to self-doubt and division. In his 1951 State of the Union Address, Truman stated:

The heart of our common defense effort is the North Atlantic community. Next to the United States, Europe is the largest workshop in the world. It is also a homeland of the great religious beliefs shared by many of our citizens—beliefs which are now threatened by the tide of communism. Strategically, economically and morally the defense of Europe is a part of our own defense.<sup>22</sup>

And yet, the purposes of NATO were broader than the purposes of Europe, for the security of the free world and Western security were now seen as symbiotic. And the security of any part of the free world was now seen as having a direct psychological and political impact on each other part. In that same address, Truman spoke of the need for a program of military assistance “to many areas of the world which are trying to defend their freedom.” He asserted, “The defense of Europe is the basis for the defense of the whole free world—ourselves included.”

Many viewed the NATO alliance as a “traditional” European alliance pure and simple. After all, as John Lewis Gaddis puts it, NATO “had been a European initiative from the beginning; it was as explicit an invitation as has ever been extended from smaller powers to a great power to construct an empire and include them within it.”<sup>23</sup> It created power to counteract power, unity to counteract another union, in this case, that of the Eastern Bloc. Truman, however, did not care to define NATO as such. He wanted NATO to be a part and a continuation of great American traditions even as it deviated from them. If the framework were European, he hoped that the meaning would be that of American principle. He therefore faced problems similar to those faced by Wilson when America joined the Entente.

Wilson had sought to meld American power with European power while maintaining a distinction in American purposes. Wilson had “transvaluated” Washington’s principle of non-involvement in Europe by insisting that our superiority and uniqueness no longer compelled us to “stay apart,” but rather compelled us to action. The idea of power through unity with the world had begun to replace the idea of power through detachment from it. The idea that we had to avoid corrupting ourselves and our institutions through association with those less virtuous and enlightened than ourselves had given way to the idea of the meliorative effect which contact with us had on the ideas and institutions of others.

Perpetuating Wilson’s concern for the melding of mission and power, Truman never spoke of NATO without also speaking of principles—and not just of principles of the Cold War but of principles which transcended geopolitical concerns. Although NATO is often seen as evidence of the United States’ plunge into “realpolitik,” Truman tried to prevent NATO from bearing such narrow significance. As did Wilson, he insisted that American principles propelled the

United States toward greater involvement in the world. On May 15, 1950, he sought to prepare Americans for the task:

Now, more than ever before, the United States must lead in the practice of genuine democracy. The whole world looks to us to emphasize the superiority of a way of life in which the individual is preeminent. Everything that we do—or fail to do—is judged more critically than it has ever been in the past. . . . But today, it is not enough to preserve freedom and the spirit of cooperation within our own borders. We must encourage those same ideals abroad. In the modern world, where one strong nation seeks to dominate all mankind, freedom will survive only if we cooperate with other freedom-minded countries in building common defenses against aggression.<sup>24</sup>

Over and over again, Truman insisted that such cooperation was more than a necessity; it was also an affirmation of American ideals.

It is interesting, however, that increasingly, when Truman spoke of our principles, he spoke not of “ours” exclusively but of those we “shared” with Western European and other freedom-loving countries. In his January 8, 1951 State of the Union Address, Truman avowed:

The free nations believe in the dignity and the worth of man. We believe in independence for all nations. We believe that free and independent nations can band together in a world order based on law. We believe that such a world order can and should spread the benefits of modern science and industry, better health and education, more food and rising standards of living—throughout the world. . . . The free nations, however, are bound together by more than ideals. They are a real community bound together also by the ties of self-interest and preservation. If they fall apart, the results would be fatal to freedom.<sup>25</sup>

Truman argued that free nations were naturally bound together by their common interest in defending a free and principled way of life. They were concerned with preservation, yes, but with the preservation of something. On December 23, 1950, he declared, “Not in the history of the world has there been a time when two great powers have faced each other under the circumstances with which we face the Communists. The only way that situation can be worked out for the welfare of the world is for those people who believe in ethics, morals and the right to associate themselves together to meet the menace of those who do not believe in ethics, morals and right and who have no idea of honor or truth.”

Indeed, the NATO agreement required “binding ourselves together” with other powers. The United States would not go so far as the Brussels Pact nations wanted in agreeing to supply *automatically*, if one nation were attacked, all the military and other aid and assistance in its power (in effect, going to war). It did, however, agree to a Canadian compromise plan which stipulated that instead of becoming immediately involved in war, each nation would be expected to lend aid to the victim in accordance with its own constitutional processes. Truman explained in his *Memoirs*, “In plain language, this means there is an ob-



ligation to give all aid possible, but subject to the constitutional procedures of each country.”<sup>26</sup> Clearly, the League of Nations idea resonated in the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance. This time, the reservations of Congress regarding adherence to our own constitutional procedures were addressed. This time, Congress recognized the inherently larger threat contained within smaller acts of aggression. This time, the alliance was more traditional in that it was designed as a *counterpoise* to Soviet power.

NATO was based on the idea of a “balanced force,” the idea being that each country would contribute its share. This created difficulties as the question of who would contribute precisely what arose. A few hours after the signing of NATO, making it clear that the United States took the assumption of its “share” very seriously, Truman sent Congress a request for a military aid authorization of \$1.4 billion with wide executive discretion regarding its use. Defense assistance was to go to NATO, Greece, Korea and the Philippines. On October 6, 1949, Truman signed the “Mutual Defense Assistance Program” into law.

In September 1950, after the outbreak of fighting in Korea, the United States went so far as to propose the enlistment of Germany in a plan for the integrated defense of Europe, a plan which caused great trepidation in France. Acheson sought to find a way in which German technology and manpower could participate in a major way without the revival of a German military system. Truman approved a plan which called for additional U.S. ground forces in Europe and, significantly, for the combination of all U.S. ground forces into a European defense force with an international staff coordinated by NATO. The United States announced that Dwight D. Eisenhower would become NATO’s first supreme commander. NATO approved the idea of a united command but German participation was approved only in principle. It was to be six years before a truly integrated defense would become a reality.

Truman often sounded like the ultimate Wilsonian internationalist as he defended America’s plunge into power-politics. This was the case even in 1952, when he proposed the “Mutual Security Program,” calling for \$7.9 billion in military, economic and technical assistance to Europe, Asia, the Near East, Africa and Latin America. The phenomenal expansion of U.S. security concerns might have appalled Wilson, but the idea behind it probably would have sounded just right:

In the last analysis, our leadership must stand or fall on the moral power behind it. No nation, of course, can undertake policies which are not squarely and solidly based on national self-interest. But world leadership in these perilous times calls for policies which, while springing from self-interest transcend it—policies which serve as a bridge between our own national objectives and the needs and aspirations of other free people. I deeply believe that the Mutual Security Program is an expression of a new spirit in the world—a spirit based on faith in democracy and human decency and looking to a new collaboration among nations and peoples. It expresses the deep reality of our friendship for other peoples—the sincerity of our determination to join with them in building a world where freedom, justice and security will exist for all.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, in forging new alliances and programs, Truman attempted, as did Wilson when he forged wartime alliances, to prevent a diminution of American purposes. We see during the Cold War, as we did during the United States' participation in World War I, a burgeoning tension within and between American principles—not just a combination of them; an interaction and accommodation with European ideas—not just an opposition to them. It is by now evident, however, that there was a major difference. For Wilson, American participation in the Entente and the American military buildup were an unpleasant but necessary wartime deviation from the peacetime norm. For Truman, the strengthening of our military and of our strategic alliances was something which had to be accepted for the foreseeable future. And that meant that cooperation with others—not just aid to others, not just leadership of others, not just interaction with others, but *genuine cooperation* had to be accepted.

Accordingly, it became ever more difficult for Truman to define for us a mission which had as its trademark a lofty superiority to the old world methods of Europe. Emphasizing cooperation as he did, Truman now laid less claim to being superior to all other nations than to being superior to the most heinous one. It was the superiority of the “free world” to the world dominated by the Kremlin that he now emphasized. On January 7, 1953, he would assert that:

The difference stares at us from the map of Europe today. To the west of the line that tragically divides Europe we see nations continuing to act and live in the light of their own traditions and principles. On the other side, we see the dead uniformity of a tyrannical system imposed by the rulers of the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, it should be remembered that the United States hoped that such programs as the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan would make *its own principles* irresistible to those it sought to befriend. It is nevertheless significant that Truman was now willing to define democracy more broadly than Wilson and to view deviations from our own definition more forgivingly. As much as he wanted NATO to be imbued with American principles, he repeatedly stressed the United States' *commonality* with its NATO allies.

For Wilson, the key to commonality was Americanization. Truman adhered to Wilson's belief that the dissemination of American ideas and practices could only contribute to harmony. But unity among the Western powers was in itself so essential to a favorable distribution of power and hence to peace and democracy that cooperation might have to take precedence over the dissemination of American ideals and practices. In advocating the Mutual Security Program, Truman stated:

These nations are our friends and not our satellites. As our friends, they contribute to the shared wisdom and faith of the free world—a wisdom and faith in which no nation can claim a monopoly. We must accordingly take care to treat them as friends. We must

not act as though we wished to degrade them to the rank of satellites by exacting a rigid and humiliating subservience which no free nation could with dignity accept.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, in a special message to the Senate transmitting the North Atlantic Treaty on April 12, 1949, Truman had said:

Together, our joint strength is of tremendous significance to the future of free men in every part of the world. For this Treaty is clear evidence that differences in language and in economic and political systems are no real bar to the effective association of nations devoted to the great principles of human freedom and justice.<sup>30</sup>

Truman stipulated that our cooperation was of and for democracy. We were broadening our definition of democracy precisely because the cause of democracy—our cause—was more urgent:

The concrete requirements of American security compel us to a policy of international cooperation. But it would be, I believe, a misrepresentation of the American people to suppose that self-interest—even wise and enlightened self-interest is the only cause for our concern with the outside world. As a nation, we have been dedicated through our history to the belief that responsible men deserve a democratic government and a free society. This is the essence of our way of life. . . . If through inaction we desert the cause of democracy, the democratic hope may be exterminated in broad areas of the earth. If we rise to our historic tradition, we can add powerful momentum to the democratic counter-offensive which inspires in the people of the world a sense of their own destiny as free men—and which will in the end burst the bonds of tyranny everywhere on earth.<sup>31</sup>

Clearly, NSC-68 and NATO further circumscribed Truman's relationship with Wilsonian internationalism. The idea that containment of and coexistence with the Soviets was insufficient for peace, security and justice was, in a sense, Wilsonian, for the Wilsonian concert of nations was to be a concert of *free* nations and the spread of capitalism was viewed as a prerequisite to the new world order. Truman, like Wilson, was coming to believe that a triumph of democratic principles was not only beneficial to but *essential* for world peace. Herein lies the complexity. At the same time that our very survival seemed to depend on the bolstering of democracy everywhere it was threatened, our mission was defined less in terms of an effusion of specifically American principles and more in terms of compromise with others with a *similar* political outlook. At the same time that we rejected the notion of peaceful coexistence with the Soviets as ultimately self-defeating, we acquired a comradeship with others who were not necessarily America-oriented. We had to ignite our missionary fervor in order to gain momentum in the struggle against what was perceived to be the Soviet drive for world domination and, at the same time, to lessen that fervor in order to get along with others.

We were irrevocably involved in the world and, as Wilson had foreseen, that provided us with both great opportunities and great dangers. We were adopting

a military posture, expanding our peacetime forces and our military spending, joining and building military alliances, engaging in covert actions and thinking "strategically," all of which often seemed to go against the democratic grain. And we were doing it for the sake of democracy. Thus, Truman definitely had an internationalist vision. But that vision and the circumstances surrounding it were more complicated than in Wilson's day.

Our mission had to be redefined according to our energized role in the world. It was becoming part of our political creed to *actively* seek ways to increase the freedom of others, and that task seemed, more than ever before, to depend on physical power. There remained the Wilsonian idea that freedom's real power lay in its attraction to the minds and hearts of mankind. But its attraction was increasingly dependent upon its ability to *protect and enhance* human lives. And, the attractiveness of our democracy was increasingly dependent upon our willingness to protect and enhance the lives of others. Physical strength was an obvious prerequisite to our new task. The United States had to prove itself to be the strongest, the most compassionate and the most engaged component in the Cold War. As Acheson described the aim of the administration's policies: "Its central aim and purpose was to safeguard the highest interest of our nation, which was to maintain as spacious an environment as possible in which free states might exist and flourish. Its method was common action with like-minded states to secure and enrich the environment and to protect one another from predators through mutual aid and effort."<sup>32</sup>

Raw strength, an outward-looking stance and a compassionate image were all important, for if America was weak and on the defensive, or uncaring and detached (as Russia had gambled it would be in Berlin), undecided countries would be less likely to lean toward the United States. For example, on May 12, 1947, the Acting High Commissioner for Austria had reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff the following:

With the country still an integral unit Austrians continue to be faced with dilemma of choosing between eastern and western orientation. So far they have maintained western orientation on basis of strong U.S. and British support and expectation that it will continue. Recently, however, Soviet and Communist pressure to make Austria turn towards USSR have been increasing again, and Austrians have therefore been again preoccupied by question whether they should maintain resistance to Soviet Union or endeavor to get along with it by collaborating. . . . They wish to maintain resistance against the latter but not at risk of being forced into it by being abandoned by western powers again as they feel they were at time of forcible Anschluss by Germany. Major factor in their decision whether to maintain resistance to east and orientation to west will be their estimate whether *concrete support* for Austria by American people, Congress and Govt. will continue.<sup>33</sup>

From 1949 on, Truman and Acheson were consumed with showing precisely that "concrete support" to those threatened with communist takeover or susceptible to drifting into Soviet orbit. Test of this commitment came soon with North

Korea's invasion of the South. As George Bohlen argued, the Korean War led to the "militarization" of NATO and changed the nature of the NATO alliance:

Before Korea, NATO had been the classic form of political and military alliance binding a group of states to joint defense if any one of the members was attacked. . . . The idea became prevalent that only armies actually in existence along the edge of danger could provide protection. We pledged to keep a minimum of six divisions in West Germany, which was to be rearmed.<sup>34</sup>

Bohlen argued that the Soviet Union probably gave the go-ahead to the North Korean invasion of South Korea because of American influence in Japan and because Korea looked "ripe for the taking," not, as the Truman administration seemed to believe, because the Soviets were "impervious to risks" or absolutely "determined to spread the Communist system throughout the world":

Encouraged by the total withdrawal of American military support from Korea, Stalin probably never dreamed that the U.S. would intervene, and thought that the Korean attack would be viewed as part of a civil war. . . . There was little doubt that Stalin and the North Korean dictator, Kim Il Sung, believed that the military action would be quick, with the South Koreans rising to support the Communists and there would be no other chance for any other country to do anything.<sup>35</sup>

As a result of an "overinterpretation of Communism's goal," Bohlen further argued, the United States not only changed NATO but also overextended its commitments way beyond NATO so that, by 1955, it had 450 bases in thirty-six countries, and had formed political and military pacts with twenty countries outside Latin America. "Before Korea" the picture was quite different:

[T]he United States had only one commitment of a political or military nature outside the Western Hemisphere. That was the North Atlantic Treaty. Our bases in Germany and Japan were regarded as temporary, to be given up when the occupation ended. True, as a hangover from prewar days, we felt it necessary to retain bases in the Philippines, but there was no pledge on their use. The only other places we had military facilities were in England, where we had transit privileges, and Saudi Arabia, where we had an airfield.<sup>36</sup>

Although Bohlen rightly sees Korea as a trigger for the vast expansion of American military commitments, it is important to recall that National Security Council documents along with Truman's speeches had *already* indicated an American willingness to expand its commitments should new threats to our "way of life" appear. Korea was viewed as just such a threat, and probably would have been viewed this way regardless of Soviet reasons for sanctioning the invasion. Moreover, recent documents show that Bohlen's explanation of Soviet "reasons" somewhat underestimated Soviet ambitions.

Although Europeans reacted as fearfully to Korea as the United States, es-

pecially expressing the fear that the United States would become so bogged down in the East that it would forget the West, Europeans were more reluctant than the United States to pour large amounts into their own defense. This was partly due to the belief that they could hide behind the nuclear shield of the United States, partly due to the fear of antagonizing the Soviet Union and partly due to left-leaning political currents. In a September 1951 meeting of NATO at Ottawa, the United States issued an invitation to Greece and Turkey to join and appointed a Temporary Council Committee to coordinate defense ends. Acheson recalled:

In both efforts we ran into sulky resistance from our smaller associates caused by a belief that the three larger allies arrogated too much to themselves, that the United States Congress was trying to control their trade with the Communist bloc, and that their economic troubles flowed from U.S. pressures for rearmament. The bloom was off NATO, the fears of a year before had faded as music wafted westward from the World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace in East Berlin. All this led politicians and writers in Western Europe to question the danger from the East and the need for rearmament upon which the Americans so continually harped.<sup>37</sup>

With the advent of the Korean War, the United States' relationship with Europe changed still further. Whereas previously the Brussels Pact nations had urged Washington to endorse the strongest type of alliance possible, now Washington was the one urging great unity, greater strength and greater awareness of the Soviet threat. And, the more the United States took the lead in this respect, the more it incurred the blame for the bad relations between Western and Eastern Europe. Fighting an increasing lack of resolve in Europe, the United States came to be a symbol of firmness, which, to some, meant cold narrow-mindedness. In an ironic twist of fate, the United States would be accused of militarism and imperialism—of the very things against which it had fought two world wars and against which it was engaged in the Cold War. America was imputed with those qualities against which its resources were mustered as it sought to inhibit, control and ultimately defeat the ability of the Soviet Union to have its way in the world.

Truman, always concerned with reputation as well as physical power, recognized the danger of acting the overbearing and paternalistic giant. He emphasized that there had to be a shared purpose with other free nations, not a subservience of other free nations to ours (above). In addition, Truman continued to try to place his efforts at uniting and strengthening the free world within a Wilsonian framework. On January 19, 1951, he claimed, "The American people today recognize the truths that Wilson proclaimed and by the vigorous support of the United Nations our country has taken the lead in mobilizing the strength of free men against the forces of tyranny and despotism." He added, "I was a fan of Woodrow Wilson, who I think is one of the five or six great Presidents that this country has ever produced."<sup>38</sup> American leadership and democratiza-

tion—these were indeed the key components in Wilson's dreams about our future role in the world. But they were materializing in a way far different from what Wilson ever imagined.

## VIETNAM AND KOREA

American foreign policy in the 1950s was characterized by the global expansion of our "commitments," our material resources and our military might. Having hitherto focused our mission and our power primarily on the United States and Europe, we suddenly assumed the role of protector of all, educator of all, provider for all. And we did so because we believed that the challenge and threat of Soviet imperialism and of Soviet-inspired communism was a global one. It seemed to Truman that any further communist victories would debilitate and demoralize the West. And it seemed that the United States was the only country with enough confidence, courage, physical might and ideological conviction to thwart the encroachment of communism on the free world.

The vast expansion of the United States' focus provided innumerable problems for its principles. This was in part because it was faced with the problem of finding a middle ground between all of its other values and its anti-communism. For example, anti-imperialism was a tried and true principle of American foreign policy. A metaphor for Truman's early approach to this principle lies in this fact: He pressured precisely those Europeans whose economies and politics he sought to bolster to abandon colonialism and hence to diminish that form of power. Anti-colonialist sentiments were directed against the very nations he sought to strengthen and befriend. Truman recalled in his *Memoirs*, "I had always been opposed to colonialism. Whatever justification may be cited at any stage, colonialism in any form is hateful to Americans."<sup>39</sup>

In the 1940s, the Truman administration did generally pressure colonial powers to withdraw, often with the implication that the United States would then "be prepared to sustain the new sovereign states that emerged."<sup>40</sup> In fact, as Morton Kaplan points out, the administration used the European Recovery Program (ERP) as leverage to move Europe away from colonialism. As incentive to do so, the U.S. Senate amended the ERP to require the administration to discontinue assistance whenever it determined that such assistance would be "inconsistent with the obligations of the U.S. under the U.N. Charter."<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, the administration exerted a good deal of pressure, for example, on the Netherlands in regard to self-determination for Indonesia. (The Netherlands gave in to this pressure in 1949 but a turbulent political situation was the immediate result.) Partly due to his Wilsonian belief that America must stand as an alternative to the communist *kind* of anti-imperialism, he pressed England to relinquish control in India.

Seemingly in line with this trend, in an August 22, 1949 address, Truman declared that the war had caused "upheavals" which could not and should not be suppressed:

As a result of the upheaval, many peoples demanded new rights and new responsibilities. Men who had lived for centuries in economic or political servitude asked for independence and a fair share of the good things of life. The war against tyranny was sustained by belief in the "Four Freedoms." Men refused to yield to dictatorship because they desired and believed they could secure conditions of material and spiritual freedom. When the war ended, they demanded to be treated as free men. They demanded a world in which they could attain security and liberty. This demand cannot be suppressed. It must not be frustrated. It presents a challenge to us and to the values of our civilization which will require all our energies and wisdom to satisfy.<sup>42</sup>

This stance posed problems for Truman, however, for some nationalities defined liberation as communization whereas Truman saw communization as the opposite of self-determination in all three senses: of nations, of individuals and of ethnic groups. Communization would most often, he believed, place the nation in subordination to the Soviet Union, the individual in subordination to the state, and ethnic traditions and religious aspirations in subordination to Marxist political theory. Thus, just as Truman had qualified the creed of self-determination because of the recent experience of fascism (above), so he qualified it because of communism. Moreover, as the anti-Soviet effort broadened, Truman gradually came to the view that anti-imperialism should only be pursued if it would not antagonize and debilitate our friends while encouraging and strengthening our opponents.

It should be noted that Truman qualified the Wilsonian emphasis on self-determination and anti-imperialism in part to preserve those principles. Given his belief that communist foreign policy destroyed them, the (sometimes overbearing) assertion of Western influence was seen as the best way to protect them. Self-determination of people, of nations and of certain ethnic groups had to be balanced with the interests of Europe, with the United States' need to influence other countries and with the requirements of the Cold War. The security of the United States still seemed to depend upon the "free" ideological orientation and political systems of others but, now, it sometimes also seemed to depend upon the temporary maintenance of certain political situations which fell short of American ideals.

Truman's dilemma in Vietnam reflected these ambiguities. Truman still adhered to the Wilsonian belief that freedom from colonialism was a hedge against communism. But, in Vietnam, those who were most fervently anti-colonialist followed Ho Chi Minh, a communist. It was too late to use anti-colonialism as a hedge. By the end of 1946, Ho Chi Minh's VietMinh were in a virtual state of war with the French, who were trying to reconstruct a government which would create an acceptable compromise between self-determination and colonialism for the Indochinese people. On the one hand, Truman did not approve of French colonialism, nor did he think it had a lasting future. On the other hand, he viewed Vietnam as strategically important for curbing the tide of communism. The difficulty of the moral choices which now confronted the United States is sad but apparent in Robert Donovan's description of early events:



The State Department was opposed to trusteeship and favored restoration of French sovereignty. Truman assented in a routine decision that turned out to be a momentous one. In 1945, the United States formally recognized French rule, while favoring eventual independence for the Indochinese. Hoping that the French would come to terms with Ho Chi Minh, a Communist and a Vietnamese nationalist, the United States for the time being stood aloof.<sup>43</sup>

As the United States became even more concerned with strengthening and unifying Western Europe, Truman became increasingly leery of policies in Indochina which would weaken France. As Morton Kaplan explains:

The loss of Indochina and its probable repercussions in the French North African colonies would weaken the role France could play in Europe. Moreover, the Communist issue was looming larger in American opinion. The official position was confined to expressing the hope that peaceful bases for adjusting the difficulties could be found. During the years 1948 and 1949, however, American economic assistance to France permitted a greater French military effort in Indochina than would otherwise have been possible.<sup>44</sup>

The Wilsonian belief that the installation of fair, democratic governments provided a hedge against communism helps to explain the difference between Truman's approach toward Indonesia and his approach toward Indochina. In Indonesia, the United States hoped to *thwart* communism by upholding the principle of self-determination. In Indochina, the anti-colonialist element was clearly communist. The American mission was made more complicated, not more clear, by the fear of communism. Although now, more than ever, America seemed to have a "cause" for which it was willing to accept global commitments and to expend massive resources, the superficial clarity of its position belied an underlying confusion. It was difficult to combine the new anti-Soviet foreign policy with traditional concerns. The urgency attached to preventing new countries from communist takeover meant that in certain cases it was initially more important to make sure the communists were not victorious than it was to guarantee the people's choice of government. (Making sure the communists were not victorious was, the reasoning went, the only guarantee that the people would ultimately have any political choices at all.)

Seeming to confirm this viewpoint, as Mao Tse-tung and the communists emerged victorious in China, and as the French struggled to stave off communism in Vietnam, communists were also fighting against newly independent governments in the Philippines, India, Burma and Indonesia and against the British in Malaysia. Although they did not call it such, the Truman administration began to fear a domino effect. It was for this reason that Truman accepted the Elysee Agreement of March 8, 1949 between the French and their collaborator Bao Dai. The Elysee Agreement recognized the "independence of Vietnam" and yet gave France special privileges including responsibility for foreign affairs and defense. In addition, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were obliged to

become members of the "French Union." Even though Truman and the State Department recognized that the agreement failed to offer the Indochinese people independence, they saw it as their only chance of halting the contagious spread of communism all across Asia.<sup>45</sup>

NSC-48/2 of December 1949 made the connection between the power configuration and the political orientation of Asia and the security of the United States and Europe. It called for "the gradual reduction and eventual elimination by nonmilitary means of the preponderant power and influence of the USSR in Asia to such a degree that the Soviet Union will not be capable of threatening from that area the Security of the United States and its friends." It advocated "development of sufficient military power in selected noncommunist nations to maintain internal security and to prevent further encroachment by communism" and "prevention of power relationships in Asia which would enable any other nation or alliance to threaten the security of the United States from that area, or the peace, national independence and stability of the Asiatic nations."<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, in 1950, Truman allocated \$10 million for military assistance to Indochina and announced that the United States would give economic and military assistance to Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and France.

With the outbreak of the Korean War, geopolitical stakes increased and geopolitical tactics multiplied. Acheson recommended and Truman agreed to increase aid to French Indochina and to send a military mission there. Clearly, the principle of self-determination had, in this case, given way to the idea that if we did not help to "determine" the destinies of others, the Soviets would.

In December 1952, NATO adopted a resolution declaring that the French position in Indochina conformed with the aims of the Alliance and deserved members' support. In response, Truman approved \$30.5 million more for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. By the end of his tenure, the United States was bearing between one-third and one-half of France's burden in the Indochinese War. The real "burden" in Vietnam would, of course, come later.

In the 1950s, our "burden" was Korea. Korea inspired a threefold increase in defense spending, a buildup of nuclear weapons and military involvement in what some perceived to be a far-off "civil war." But Korea was much more than a drain on America's resources. It was a drain on its collective psyche. It was a war that dragged on with no apparent resolution short of nuclear attack (an option which Truman rarely hinted he might use but which he never really contemplated); a war which divided the American public between those who favored the strategy of Truman and the Joint Chiefs and those who favored the strategy advocated by MacArthur; an unpopular war due to its endless cycle of death and its seemingly uncertain military goals.

It was the first war in which civilians beheld nuclear war as a dreaded possibility. It was the first war in which it was the United States and not Europe taking the hard line against the enemy, a war in which Europe began to hesitate regarding its enemy status with the Soviet Union. It took place in a land far

away from the United States and unfamiliar and strange to Americans. Again, while the American mission was more pronounced, its cause more fervent on the surface, underneath it all there was cause for self-doubt. After all, remote wars, massive military buildups which included the potentially devastating use of nuclear force and the American role as leader of the Cold War and advocate of the hard line seemed at odds with that generous, pacifistic and mediating spirit which, Americans had been taught to believe, was uniquely American.

Truman saw Korea as "a repetition in a larger scale of what had happened in Berlin." He saw it as part of Soviet expansionism and as ominous proof that "communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war."<sup>47</sup> In a November 6, 1950 address, Truman warned:

We are confronted by Communist imperialism—a reactionary movement that despises liberty and is the mortal foe of personal freedom. The threat of Communist aggression is a continuing menace to world peace. . . . So long as they persist in that course, the free nations have but one choice if they are to remain free. They must oppose strength with strength.<sup>48</sup>

Given his belief that the Soviet State and ideology would advance anywhere there was an opening, Truman decided it was time to frustrate Soviet ambitions. It was time to show the Soviet Union that the cost of imperialism was greater than the reward. Failure to respond to the North Korean invasion of South Korea would have been parallel to an earlier failure to respond to Hitler. In his *Memoirs*, Truman recalled:

I remembered how each time that the democracies failed to act it had encouraged the aggressors to keep going ahead. Communism was acting in Korea just as Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese had acted ten, fifteen, and twenty years earlier. I felt certain that if South Korea was allowed to fall Communist leaders would be emboldened to override nations closer to or own shores.<sup>49</sup>

In addition, Truman saw North Korea's aggression as part of a Soviet drive to demoralize and debilitate the West. He recalled, "The Central Intelligence Agency's estimate of the situation was that the Russians were not themselves willing to go to war but that they wanted to involve us as heavily as possible in Asia so that they might gain a free hand in Europe." Many Europeans feared precisely that. Truman continued, "Our British allies and many statesmen of Europe saw in the Chinese moves a ruse to bring to a halt American aid in the rebuilding of Europe. . . . The first commandment of Soviet foreign policy has always been to divide the enemies of the Soviet Union, and the unity that United States leadership had created in Europe was the most important target for world Communism's attack."<sup>50</sup> Korea, therefore, required us to adopt an even more vigorous program for strengthening the free world; NATO would be the focus of that program.

If involvement in the war seemed to threaten his work in the West, Truman believed that a weak response would have demoralized and destabilized the West still more. He agreed with Averell Harriman's assessment that "If we gave in to Communism, morale would slip badly" and that "we would do nothing but harm in Europe if we were to surrender in the Far East."<sup>51</sup>

Although it has often been implied that Truman's interpretation of the Korean invasion arose from an exaggerated assessment of Soviet intentions and from a misguided emphasis on Soviet ideology, evidence now confirms not only that in early 1950 Stalin himself gave Kim Il-sung the go-ahead to reunify Korea by military means, but also that Stalin's move was politically as well as geopolitically motivated.<sup>52</sup> The background to that move was communist victory over the nationalists in China. Once the Chinese communists became a power to contend with, Stalin's foreign policy opportunism and his ideological fervor came logically together. Stalin proclaimed the Communist Party of China (CCP) to be the revolutionary vanguard of Asia. The Sino-Soviet Pact was a way for Stalin to reinforce communist advances in Asia while at the same time ensuring that Chinese goals remained tied to Soviet interests. According to Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, "The real strength of the new Sino-Soviet alliance was in Mao's personal allegiance to Stalin as the supreme Communist leader."<sup>53</sup> Zubok and Pleshakov see the alliance with China as the biggest cause for Stalin's reassessment of the Korean situation:

From Stalin's viewpoint this treaty was a watershed: the Yalta-Postdam agreement on the spheres of influence had been broken. The world was now open for a redivision of spheres of influence on the basis of new, ideologically drawn alliances. As a Leninist, Stalin knew that this redivision meant global war. He said to Mao: "If we make a decision to revise treaties, we must go all the way." This phrase, in a nutshell, contained the origins of the Korean War. As the world headed for its third global confrontation, the Korean Peninsula acquired new strategic meaning. Stalin worried that, should the United States rearm Japan in the future, South Korea could become a dangerous beach-head for enemy forces. Therefore, it had to be captured before Japan could get back on its feet.<sup>54</sup>

(While Zubok and Pleshakov probably overstate Stalin's belief in the inevitability of global war, they convincingly refute analysis that overlooked Stalin's "revolutionary-imperial paradigm.")

John Lewis Gaddis answers the question of why the normally cautious Stalin would authorize an attack on Korea similarly:

Stalin's new optimism about the prospects for international revolution provides a possible explanation. The Soviet push for influence in Western Europe had run up against its limits, what with the success of the Marshall Plan, the failure of the Berlin Blockade, the formation of an independent West Germany, and the organization of NATO. Asia looked more promising: the Chinese had shown that nationalism more easily aligned with communism there than in Europe; and as Stalin had none too subtly suggested to

Liu Shagaqi the previous summer, there might well be opportunities beyond Chinese borders.<sup>55</sup>

Gaddis also points to Stalin's tendency to advance in situations where he thought he could do so without provoking too strong a response.<sup>56</sup> The Americans had shown a relative lack of interest in Korea, and evidence does show that Stalin was surprised by the American reaction. It is significant, however, that Stalin responded to American intervention by pressuring the Chinese to help their North Korean comrades. Documents also reveal that Mao was enthusiastic about resisting the Americans and planned to intervene all along.<sup>57</sup>

Truman's goal was to win the war, or at least gain the upper hand, without taking measures which would escalate the war or widen the conflict. A widening of the conflict would be destabilizing and frightening, would force us to expend our resources in the East with little left for the West, would contravene our predilection for moderation and would probably alienate our Western Allies and our own citizens; hence Truman's disagreement with MacArthur who, from the beginning, tested and defied the boundaries which Truman and the Joint Chiefs attempted to place on his goals as Commander of the U.N. forces in Korea.

Although the administration tried to avoid escalation, it nevertheless attempted to seek maximum results short of escalation. Akira Iriye explains:

To the generation of Americans who had gone through the experience of the 1930s, it was axiomatic that aggression, in particular of a world-wide nature, must be resisted with determination in order to discourage the aggressor from further acts of violence. Strategically, however, United States policy was not so clear-cut. Initially, the policy was to localize conflict, to recover South Korea. Soon, however, the United States decided to launch military action in North Korea and extend its military control over that region, as a step toward the reunification of Korea under South Korean leadership. The decision, reached by President Truman and his highest advisory circles in September 1950, was based not only on the estimate that military action was necessary in order to discourage further military aggression in the south, but also on the calculation that here was an opportunity to establish an anti-communist regime in the whole of Korea.<sup>58</sup>

Truman agreed to allow MacArthur "hot pursuit" of North Korean forces beyond the 38th parallel. Under no circumstances, however, was he to cross the Korean border at points of juncture with communist Asia or the Soviet Union. Moreover, no non-Korean forces were to be used along these borders. Air and naval actions against Manchurian or Soviet territory were banned. With MacArthur either defying, publicly denouncing or convincing the Joint Chiefs to remove many of the restrictions placed on him, and with the Chinese beginning to enter the North in droves, Truman became ever more fearful that we would find ourselves engaged in a drawn-out war with China or the Soviet Union, a war which would hamper our work in the West; a war which we would certainly prefer to avoid. The nightmare of two world wars haunted us.

Truman relished the fact that the U.N. was involved in Korea, and was leery of setting unpalatable goals for U.N. participants. The quick response to the Korean invasion by U.N. forces seemed partially to vindicate the idea of collective security as envisioned by the U.N. Charter. Truman declared, "All the members of the United Nations who have endorsed the action of the Security Council realize the significance of the step that has been taken. This united and resolute action to put down lawless aggression is a milestone toward the establishment of a rule of law among nations." Truman took pride in the cooperation of American forces with the U.N. army. Ground troops from Australia, Great Britain, the Philippines, Thailand and Turkey joined Korean and American forces, while countries from France to New Zealand provided naval assistance. Truman recalled that, considering monetary and supply contributions, forty-two nations had by mid-October offered their aid to the United Nations.<sup>59</sup>

It should be noted, however, that most contributing nations acted primarily under American pressure; they were fearful of Soviet offenses in Europe and, throughout the war, pressured the United States to take a more conciliatory approach toward their North Korean "enemies." Truman despaired at those in Europe and elsewhere who, intimidated by the threat of another major war, leaned toward appeasement. Truman continually warned against both appeasement and the escalation of the conflict in Korea. In his January 9, 1952 State of the Union Address, he expounded:

We are working night and day to bring peace to the world and to spread the democratic ideals of justice and self-government to all people. . . . And yet, day in and day out, we see a long procession of timid and fearful men who wring their hands and cry out that we have lost our way, that we don't know what we are doing, that we are bound to fail. Some say we should give up the struggle for peace, and others say we should have a war and get it over with. That's a terrible statement—they want us to forget the great objective of preventing another world war—the objective for which our soldiers have been fighting in the hills of Korea.<sup>60</sup>

On March 6 he added, "We must show the world that we can meet any crisis, and that temporary frustration will not drive us to panicky aggression or to ignominious retreat. This is the challenge of free world leadership."<sup>61</sup>

Truman's determination to accept neither the submissiveness of the appeasers nor the methods of the aggressors was evident in the concrete decisions he made as Commander in Chief. When U.N. forces were pushed back deep into South Korea, and then finally regained control of South Korea up to the 38th parallel, Truman saw the time as ripe for negotiations. When MacArthur undermined this possibility by authorizing engagements north of the parallel without Washington's approval, and by publicly denouncing the idea of a negotiated peace and issuing provocative statements against China, Truman asked for MacArthur's resignation. In this, he had the approval of military and political and NATO leaders. Truman recalled that "Once the territory of the Republic of Korea was

virtually cleared of aggressor troops, our readiness toward negotiations toward armistice received new emphasis.”<sup>62</sup>

In a sense, Truman’s actions in Korea were reminiscent of the limited but activist approach he had displayed in Europe. On the other hand, the new anti-communist ethos and the power concerns surrounding it were undoing the geographical limitations previously placed on the scope of American foreign policy and were increasing the extent to which the United States attempted to exert control over the political destiny of others. The very fact that the United States was involved in a small war in Asia whose goals were both political and geopolitical was evidence of this.

Nevertheless, it wasn’t only power concerns but also concerns of principle which caused Truman to disagree with the approach favored by MacArthur. Our mission had always included the idea of restraint. The genius of our political system was seen to depend on its ability to prevent any one group or person from exerting dominating control over others. The virtue of our foreign policy was seen in the fact that we purportedly did not try to dominate others (i.e., to grab their territory, to engage in aggressive wars against them or to dictate their internal politics). Among the principles which Truman enunciated in a September 1, 1950 address on Korea were that “We believe that the future of Formosa, like that of every other territory in dispute, should be settled peacefully”; that “We do not believe in aggressive or preventative war.”<sup>63</sup> Above all, according to Truman, we were not to use people as “pawns” in the game of power-politics. For the United States, the individual still mattered, and so did individual rights.

The manner in which Truman pursued the armistice negotiations affirmed that such traditional concerns as these still influenced his conduct of foreign affairs, for the Canadians and Europeans were much more willing than the Americans to work out a compromise at the expense of their principles. Whereas Truman continued to emphasize the link between interests and principles, the British, Canadians and French were willing to accept a modified version of an Indian proposal which, in effect, would have forced South Korean POWs to submit to repatriation by North Korea. Truman refused to accept a compromise which treated the POWs as negotiable pawns. He declared:

In the last analysis, our leadership must stand or fall on the moral power behind it. No nation, of course, can undertake policies which are not squarely or solidly based on national self-interest. But world leadership in these perilous times calls for policies which, while springing from self-interest, transcend it—policies which serve as a bridge between our own national objectives and the needs of other free people.<sup>64</sup>

We had, he said, to show our determination to join with others “in building a world where freedom, justice and security will exist for all.”<sup>65</sup>

Ironically, it was this side of his behavior which often drew the accusation of extremism and rigidity. Truman was accused of not being flexible enough to forge a peace. Actually, actions such as this represented America’s most tradi-

tional principles. It was easy to see, however, how Truman's most principled behavior was sometimes mistaken for his least, for the anti-communist dimension of our mission allowed the United States' image to be negative rather than positive and made it difficult for others to distinguish between actions which stemmed from a sense of right and actions in which Truman insisted on what was right solely for the purpose of undermining communism. For many, the mingling of the old mission with the new anti-Soviet drive debased the old, or at least cast doubt on it. It was simply difficult to prove to the world that the hardest line against the Soviets was sometimes the most just.

Truman, of course, insisted that the old mission had inspired the new. What else but the traditional concern for freedom, peace and the territorial integrity of nations and open communication between them made him determined to stop what he perceived to be a Soviet threat to all of these cherished goals? Truman himself realized, however, that things were not that simple. As Wilson had discovered, a simplicity and lucidity of ideals was easier to maintain when the United States was less active in foreign affairs, when it had fewer decisions to make regarding which principles applied to which situations, how those principles could actually be translated into deeds and which principles should assume priority over which others.

Indicating the negative aspect of the American mission, Truman increasingly valued the U.N. as a forum for exposing wrongs and mobilizing public opinion against the Soviet Union. On July 3, 1952, Truman stated:

The proceedings of the United Nations, time and time again, have proclaimed to the world that the Soviets have not lived up to the principles of liberty, morality, justice and peace to which they profess to subscribe. Through the United Nations the international conscience has relentlessly exposed and sternly resisted the attempts of the Kremlin to impose a rule of force upon the peace-loving nations of the world. This process has strengthened freedom. It has given courage to the fainthearted, who might otherwise have been deceived by Communist propaganda. And, as a result, the principles of international justice, of freedom and mutual respect still exercise a far greater sway over the minds of men than the false beliefs of communism.<sup>66</sup>

Moreover, with communist propaganda conjoining the word "America" with imperialism and selfishness, the conjoining of American ideals and U.N. ideals was more important than ever. As Wilson had realized, words were weapons in the newly mobilized, expectant and communicative world.

On the other hand, in emphasizing the importance of the U.N., Truman was emphasizing principles which would *temper* our anti-Sovietism (the negative side of our mission) by reminding us of the positive long-term goals of world harmony, freedom and peace. It was because of these goals that our anti-Sovietism existed in the first place. Truman valued the U.N. because he believed it provided a channel for that middle ground between "panicky aggression and ignominious retreat."



Truman recognized that the U.N. could not provide the sort of guarantees of peace and security that Wilson had envisioned, and that the U.N. vote on Korea was only possible because the Soviet delegate was not present with a veto. He qualified his praise of the U.N., stipulating that the U.N. was not enough to counter the Soviet threat, with Korea being a prime example of this:

By itself, of course, this moral function of the United Nations would not be enough. The collective conscience of the world is not enough to repel aggression and establish order. We have learned that moral judgments must be supported by force to be effective. This is why we went into Korea. We were right in what we did in Korea in June 1950; and we are right in holding firm against aggression there now.<sup>67</sup>

Interestingly, however, he spoke more, not less, of the value of the U.N. after the Korean invasion than he did before. A January 7, 1953 speech helps to further explain this ambiguity. Truman reflected:

We must frankly recognize that the Soviet Union has been able, in certain instances, to stall the machinery of collective security. Yet it has not been able to impair the principle of collective security. The free nations of the world have retained their allegiance to that idea. They have found the means to act despite the Soviet veto, both through the United Nations itself and through the application of this principle in regional and other security arrangements that are fully in harmony with the Charter and give expression to its purposes. The free world refused to resign itself to collective suicide merely because of the technicality of the Soviet veto.<sup>68</sup>

If the machinery of the U.N. was susceptible to malfunction, Truman believed that the ideas embodied in the U.N. Charter were nevertheless functioning in Korea and elsewhere.

Truman's continued emphasis on the U.N. fit with his insistence upon the importance of cooperation in the world, and with his insistence that the right to political liberty was a universal right, beyond the whims of particular governments. On July 4, 1947, he had declared regarding the U.S. signing of the U.N. Charter:

We did so because we had learned, at staggering cost, that the nations of the world cannot live in peace and prosperity if, at the same time, they try to live in isolation. We have learned that nations are interdependent, and that recognition of our dependence upon one another is essential to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness of all mankind.<sup>69</sup>

Korea made Truman believe, more than ever, that our freedom depended upon the freedom of others and that others depended upon us for their freedom. Throughout the 1950s he reiterated two themes: that of the urgent need of others for our moral-political leadership and that of our urgent need of others who shared a similar moral-political outlook. Truman insisted that "Our security and progress are today more closely related than ever before to the advance of free-

dom and self-government in other lands” and that “the real strength of the free nations is not to be found in any single country or in any one weapon, but in the combined moral and material strength of the free world as a whole.”<sup>70</sup> On May 15, 1950, he again spoke passionately about our seminal work for freedom:

Now, more than ever before, the United States must lead in the practice of genuine democracy. The whole world looks to us to emphasize the superiority of a way of life in which the individual is preeminent. Everything that we do—or fail to do—is judged more critically than it has ever been in the past. It is the personal task, then, of each American to see that we continue to prove that our form of government offers each citizen greater opportunities than any other system of government in the world today. But today, it is not enough to preserve freedom and the spirit of cooperation only within our own borders. We must encourage those same ideals abroad. In the modern world, where one nation seeks to dominate all mankind, freedom will survive only if we cooperate with other freedom-minded countries in building common defenses against aggression.<sup>71</sup>

We were, Truman said, in the midst of “a long, hard test of strength and stamina, between the free world and the communist domain—our politics and our economy, our science and technology against the best they can do—our liberty against their slavery—our voluntary concert of free nations against their forced amalgam of people’s republics—our strategy against their strategy—our nerve against their nerve.”<sup>72</sup>

Truman’s biggest challenge, aside from maintaining that “strength and stamina,” was to keep that drive for power tied to humane principles. On December 15, 1953, he would again warn:

For us to embrace the methods and morals of communism in order to defeat Communist aggression would be a moral disaster worse than any physical catastrophe. If that should come to pass, then the Constitution and the Declaration would be utterly dead and what we are doing today would be the gloomiest burial in the history of the world.<sup>73</sup>

Truman held up the Point Four Program as proof that the American drive for power and influence was indeed still tied to its best political traditions.

## **POINT FOUR**

We shall see that Point Four clearly had the affinity of the Third World toward the Western democracies as one of its goals. Nevertheless, the Point Four Program affirms that democracy was, in Truman’s mind, not enough: not enough to prevent people from turning to communism, not enough to satisfy their basic needs and not enough to win their hearts. In launching the plan, Truman explained:

Today, in many countries of the world, the concepts of freedom and self-government are merely vague phrases. They express little to people who are engaged in a desperate struggle with ignorance and poverty. They mean little to men who must work from sunup to sundown merely to keep alive. They are not fully understood by men who cannot read or write. On the continent of Asia, the islands of the Far East, in Africa, in the Near East, are millions of people who live in poverty. In their present condition, the immediate benefit of steel plowshares, or small pox vaccinations, has more appeal than abstract ideas of democracy.<sup>74</sup>

Truman's point, of course, was not that democratization was a lost tenet of Wilsonianism but that, in areas where democracy and prosperity were "foreign," technical and financial assistance would, by translating into concrete improvements in the lives of the people, serve democracy better than anything else. The infusion of technology and science, Truman hoped, would allow others to benefit from the United States and hence appreciate its political advantages. It was our response to Soviet propaganda. Upon signing Point Four into law, Truman explained:

The United States, in undertaking the Point 4 program, is seeking to help other peoples help themselves by extending to them the benefits of our store of technical knowledge. This program will provide means needed to translate our words of friendship into deeds. All activities will be on a cooperative basis, and projects will be undertaken by the United States only at the request of other governments. Communist propaganda holds that the free nations are incapable of providing a decent standard of living for the millions of people in the underdeveloped areas of the earth. The Point Four Program will be one of our principal ways of demonstrating the complete falsity of that charge. By patient, diligent effort, levels of education can be raised and standards of health improved to enable the people of such areas to make better use of their resources.<sup>75</sup>

The architects of the Marshall Plan realized that one of the reasons the Marshall Plan worked was that Europeans had the scientific and technical know-how to make good use of the financial aid which America bestowed upon them. Whereas the Marshall Plan provided aid to people who had the know-how and expertise to use it well, Point Four was to render the know-how and the expertise themselves. Truman declared, in his January 20, 1949 Inaugural Address, that:

The United States is pre-eminent among nations in the development of industrial and scientific techniques. The material resources which we can afford to use for assistance of other peoples are limited. But our imponderable resources in technical knowledge are constantly growing and are inexhaustible. I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. And, in cooperation with other nations, we should foster capital investment in areas needing development.<sup>76</sup>

The goals and assumptions of Point Four were an extension of the goals and assumptions of the Marshall Plan, for if it assumed that the imposition of democratic ideas and financial aid would be insufficient for economic growth and political stability, it also assumed that the technological aid it provided *would* foster economic growth and political stability; and that this would make recipient countries receptive to democracy. (Indeed, as a precursor to Point Four, in 1948 and 1949, Economic Cooperation Administration [ECA] aid was extended to China, Burma, Indochina, Thailand, and Philippines and Korea.) As Robert Packenham puts it, "The theory of Point Four was that technical assistance contributed to economic development, and economic development contributes to a host of politically good things—democracy, peace, noncommunist governments, good will, international understanding."<sup>77</sup>

Like the Marshall Plan, then, Point Four embodied the ideas that communism arises from poverty and despair and that if people are to favor democracy the spiritual and material benefits must be evident. In a June 19, 1950 address, Truman asserted:

Famine, disease, and poverty are the scourge of vast areas of the globe. . . . Conditions such as these are the seedbed of political unrest and instability. They are a threat to the security and growth of free institutions everywhere. It is in areas where these conditions exist that communism makes its greatest inroads.<sup>78</sup>

Truman added to the idea that people were susceptible to communism if they were impoverished, the idea that they were susceptible if they were "backward." In a March 11, 1951 letter to the Chairman of the International Development Board, Truman argued:

More than ever, greater production, particularly in the underdeveloped areas is essential to the stability and freedom of those areas and to the peace of the whole world. Recent events in economically underdeveloped areas have demonstrated that men will defend the cause of freedom when they know from experience that it is the true way to economic and social progress. Economic stagnation is the advance guard of Soviet conquest.<sup>79</sup>

Packenham points out that the idea that the Marshall Plan approach was viable outside of Western Europe was simply not questioned or discussed; nor, he notes, was the linkage between technical assistance and development nor between the satisfaction of hunger and want and the spurning of communism.

Point Four reflected larger trends in the 1950s—the overshadowing of other issues by the issue of communism versus democracy and the attempt to involve the United States in the outcome of that issue on a global scale. It was part of the larger "counteroffensive" which now encompassed all of American foreign policy. On March 6, 1952 Truman warned:

The gun is but one weapon in the Soviet arsenal of aggression. If we ignored the necessity for building moral and political and economic strength, we would expose ourselves to the danger of communist gains which could be at least as damaging as outright aggression. Since the Soviet Union does not rely exclusively on military attack, we would be foolish indeed to rely exclusively on military defenses.<sup>80</sup>

In giving priority to what is now called “development,” Truman emphasized that area which communism claimed capitalism ignored: the basic necessities of life.

We had come a long way from the original demonstration idea—from the idea that America’s power would be increased by exemplifying the benefits of democracy. Had an example been all that was required, we certainly had a lot to stand upon. As Paul Johnson puts it, “The agonies of Stalin’s Russia, where about 500,000 people were judicially murdered (or just murdered) by the state in the postwar period up to March 1953, formed a gruesome contrast to the America against which it was pitted. While in the immediate post-war, Stalin was piling fresh burdens on his frightened subjects, the Americans, contrary to predictions of government economists who had prophesied heavy unemployment in the conversion period, were engaging in the longest and most intense consumer spree in the nation’s history. For Americans, the taste of uninhibited prosperity was especially poignant, bringing back memories of the 1920s lost Arcadia.”<sup>81</sup>

We could not rest upon our laurels, but we could point to the tremendous success of our economy and of Europe’s, now that the Marshall Plan was having an impact. Truman extolled the financial benefits of our way of doing things, and saw the open interaction of our economy with the economies of the Point Four countries as benefiting our financial growth as well as theirs. He went so far as to call Point Four a “successor to the colonial idea”:

We want to have a prosperous world that will be interested in buying the immense amount of surplus things that we are going to have for sale. In order to do that, they have got to have something to give back to us, in order that they can buy our goods. I want to keep this factory organization of ours going at full tilt, and in order to do that, we must help these people to help themselves.<sup>82</sup>

Truman’s primary concern, however, was neither financial nor humanitarian. His main objective was the expansion of the power (which included the unity)—of the free world. In his January 7, 1953 State of the Union Address, Truman asserted that Soviet rulers were trying to “exploit” the “ferment” in the Third World. He added:

In this situation we see the meaning and the importance of the Point IV program, through which we can share our store of know-how and of capital to help these people develop their economies and reshape their societies. As we help Iranians to raise more grain, Indians to reduce the incidence of Malaria, Liberians to educate their children better, we

are at once helping to answer the desires of the people for advancement, and demonstrating the superiority of freedom over communism. There will be no quick solution for any of the difficulties of the new nations of Asia and Africa—but there may be no solution at all if we do not press forward with full energy to help these countries grow and flourish in freedom and in cooperation with the rest of the free world.<sup>83</sup>

Although Point Four was clearly the American counterpoise to communist exploitation, Truman continued to insist that the American drive for power and influence be tied firmly to its peaceful, beneficent purposes. He still refused to see anti-Sovietism as the ultimate end of American foreign policy. He preferred to see it as the means to the “great constructive tasks of peace.” He warned, “We must not be misled into thinking that our only task is to create defenses against aggression. Our whole purpose in creating a strong defense is to permit us to carry on the great constructive tasks of peace.”<sup>84</sup> In a similar vein, NSC-68 had claimed that although the policy of containment and the attempt to build a healthy international community were closely interrelated with one another, the latter also *stood on its own* as a foreign policy objective.

This was clearly Truman’s hope and desire: that Americans would undertake the task of helping others in the world achieve better living conditions, more stable polities and healthier societies because it was the right thing to do, not merely because it was necessary. For Truman, the necessary aspect of our policies was in itself part of a larger concern for what is right, since, as we have seen over and over again, Truman saw his drive to frustrate and limit Soviet expansionism as part and parcel of a drive for freedom and peace, individual rights and national sovereignty. On January 9, 1952, as he had so many times earlier, Truman emphasized the point:

To meet the crisis which now hangs over the world, we need many different kinds of strength—military, economic, political, and moral. And of all of these I am convinced that moral strength is the most vital. . . . We are engaged in a great undertaking at home and abroad—the greatest, in fact, that any nation has ever been privileged to embark upon. We are working night and day to bring peace to the world and to spread the democratic ideals of justice and self-government to all people.<sup>85</sup>

Thus, Point Four reflected the manifold and complicated nature of the United States’ new mission in the world. With Point Four, America’s mission *qua* redeemer of errant nations and benefactor of the needy and oppressed evolved still further. Once again, it was not just whether we exerted our strength, but the manner in which we exerted our strength which, Truman believed, would have a decisive impact on future civilization. But the “whether” was becoming increasingly important. The increase and maintenance of our influence throughout the globe was seen as urgent and essential.

Although our newly expansive foreign policy was clearly designed to bolster the world standing of the United States, it was done with the conviction that

only that influence could save those nations from enslavement to a foreign power and individuals in those nations from enslavement to tyrannical government. To avert those greater evils, we were now sometimes willing to tolerate lesser ones. We advocated the rearming of Germany and the joining of German and European forces. We bolstered the French in Vietnam. We placed increased emphasis on military matters and military might and on a secretive rather than open foreign policy. We were determined to influence the internal politics of as many nations as possible. We responded to Soviet propaganda with our own war of words. We engaged in a nuclear arms race.

The lofty promises which accompanied our foreign policy often made the emphasis on power and struggle in our foreign policy seem incongruous and harsh. And, conversely, the emphasis on power and struggle in our foreign policy often made those promises appear deceitful and hypocritical. The result was often disillusionment and resentment.

In spite of the generosity of its proposals, Point Four was as much a source of disappointment with the United States as it was a catalyst for better relations. The United States was simply unwilling to infuse enough money into the plan to optimize its chances of success. Truman asked for a \$45 million appropriation for the first year and got only \$35 million. If the United States was committing itself to the worldwide expansion of economic progress and democratic processes, it still gave first priority to Europe. There was, however, the larger question of whether even huge amounts of technical assistance could have solved all the attendant problems of economic underdevelopment and political instability in the Third World.

As collectivist, determinist ideas gained momentum in the 1960s, it would be the United States, not the Soviet Union, which would be accused of exploiting Third World economies. Our posture and our reputation in the world by then had even more to do with our relative position to the Soviet Union. Paul Johnson assesses what had gone right and what had gone wrong: "The original Marxist thesis was that capitalism would collapse. That had not happened. The first fall-back position (Khrushchev's) was that the 'socialist bloc' would overtake the West in living standards. That had not happened either. The second fall-back position, used from the early 1970s onward, which was sold to the Third World and became U.N. orthodoxy, was that high Western living standards, far from being the consequence of a more efficient economic system, were the immoral wages of the deliberate and systematic impoverishment of the rest of the world."<sup>86</sup>

Of course, by the 1970s, America's image had been tarnished by its involvement in Vietnam. In addition, American economic involvement in the world had become truly global, and American companies were all too eager to take advantage of the "cheap labor" and the vast untapped market of the Third World. Still, there was another side to the picture. In the 1970s, Western aid to developing countries reached proportions unimaginable in the 1950s. Official aid to the poorer countries amounted to \$91.8 billion, the largest voluntary transfer of

resources in history.<sup>87</sup> In the meantime, Soviet practices in underdeveloped countries were truly exploitative, not just opportunistic, as the resources of fledgling countries were siphoned off to the Soviet Bloc. And yet, during this period, it was America that was constantly accused of selfishness. U.N. documents condemned capitalism and labeled the economic interaction of capitalist countries with other countries "imperialism." The United States was, purportedly, "an imperialist power."

Our predicament was testimony to Truman's and Wilson's ideas that economic and military might were but one part of our power, that words could be used as weapons against us, that *our principles* had to maintain the "offensive" in the Cold War. As the U.N. became a platform for discontentment with the West, the United States found itself on the defensive, the position Truman and Wilson had tried so desperately to avoid. Given all of Wilson's and Truman's admonishments against selfishness and all of their efforts to prod Americans toward generous involvement in the world; given their constant preoccupation with our reputation and our moral standing in the world, given our valiant contribution to two world wars which we did not start and we did not want; given the rebuilding of Germany and Japan, the Marshall Plan and Point Four, America's image in the world by the 1970s seems particularly sad.



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*Part III*

**CONCLUSION**

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## Chapter 10

# The Ongoing Importance of Wilson's and Truman's Views and Achievements Regarding the Mission and Power of the United States

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Think of the difference between our course now and our course 30 years ago. After the First World War we withdrew from world affairs—we failed to act in concert with other peoples against aggression—we helped to kill the League of Nations—and we built up tariff barriers that strangled world trade. This time, we avoided those mistakes. We helped to found and sustain the United Nations. We have welded alliances that include the greater part of the free world. And we have gone ahead with other free countries to help build their economies and link us all together in a healthy world trade. . . . Think about those years of weakness and indecision and the World War II which was the evil result. Then think about the speed and courage and decisiveness with which we have moved against the Communist threat since World War II. (Truman, Farewell Address, January 15, 1953)

Whereas Wilson and Truman both saw autocracy, colonialism and poverty as causes of the political malaise which could lead to bolshevism, Truman increasingly saw the Soviet Union as the *cause* rather than the *symptom* of the problems in Europe and elsewhere. Whereas Wilson heralded the idea of co-opting the communists into our camp through moral suasion, beneficent deeds and strident anti-imperialism, Truman came to believe that sheer physical might was essential for stopping Soviet expansion. The inhibition of Soviet expansionist goals and the international scope of American power, along with the allure of a better way of life, was our best hope for convincing the Bolsheviks that their ideology was impractical and unjust.

This departure from Wilson's particular approach toward communism indicated Truman's accession toward a Wilsonian idea which he had previously acceded to only warily: As did Wilson, Truman came to believe that American

influence over a people and benefit to that people were one and the same. For, the United States could bring people the technology, funds and arms, and the moderate political ideas and practices which they were often incapable of providing themselves. Thus, as did Wilson, Truman found himself supporting policies in which bringing American influence to a region sometimes superseded the importance of bringing freedom to a region. Democracy would, after all, be an eventual corollary of that influence. Truman's discomfort with such an idea perhaps explains why he preached against arrogant, chauvinistic attitudes toward other countries precisely at a time when the global assertion of American power was a primary concern.

Truman insisted that it would be a "misrepresentation of the American people to suppose that self-interest—even wise and enlightened self-interest" was, in the 1950s any more than it had been in the 1940s, the only cause for America's concern with the outside world. Traditional American principles of generosity and fair play, of equal rights for nations and individuals, of freedom and justice for all: These principles, according to Truman, sustained us as individuals within a community and as a community in relationship with the rest of the world. Without these principles, he counseled, we were but one power among others. With them, we were the embodiment of a *particular* vision with *universal* appeal. Although we were engaged in an increasingly hostile and global Cold War, Truman strove to bind the Cold War tightly to the American tradition:

As a nation, we have been dedicated through our history to the belief that responsible men deserve a democratic government and a free society. This belief is the essence of our way of life. We would betray our innermost convictions if today we were to flee the cause of free peoples. If through inaction we desert the cause of democracy, the democratic hope may be exterminated in broad areas of the earth. If we rise to our historic traditions, we can add powerful momentum to the democratic counter-offensive which inspires in the people of the world a sense of their own destiny as free men—and which will in the end burst the bonds of tyranny everywhere on earth.<sup>1</sup>

Reminiscent of Wilson's appeal to the German people, Truman began to appeal to the Russian people, implying that *the rights and struggles of all peoples* transcended the *superficial divisions* of the Cold War. In a March 4, 1952 address broadcast from the Voice of America Floating Radio Transmitter "Courier," Truman said:

There is one thing I want this ship to say—over and over again—to our friends throughout the world, and especially to the Soviet Union and those behind the Iron Curtain: The United States is working night and day to bring peace to the world. As President of the United States, I say with all my heart that we yearn for peace, and we want to work with all nations to secure peace. We have no quarrel with the people of the Soviet Union or with the people of any other country.<sup>2</sup>

This appeal, although calling for unity, was part of a counteroffensive. Acknowledging the increasing importance of propaganda on February 22, 1950, Truman warned: "The cause of freedom is being challenged throughout the world today by the forces of imperialistic communism. This is a struggle, above all else, for the minds of men. Propaganda is one of the most powerful weapons the Communists have in this struggle."<sup>3</sup> Truman, of course, continued to view our best propaganda weapon as the "truth" to counter their "lies." On May 12, he added:

The Communists want to take over all the world, and they are trying to win converts to their side by telling preposterous lies about the United States. . . . That is why I have been urging a great campaign of truth. I would like to see our newspapers, our magazines, our radios and our motion picture companies join with the Government in spreading the truth to Europe, Asia, and Africa, about what we are really like in this country.<sup>4</sup>

Truman admonished again against "the weapon so widely used by the Nazis, the Fascists, and the Communists," the "big lie technique."

However, the fact that Truman's call for unity with the Soviet people and for the dissemination of truth to the Soviet people was, as was Wilson's appeal to the German people, part of an attempt to counter "their" propaganda with our own points to the difficulty of our position. Truman founded the CIA and was the first American president to sanction what came to be known as "covert operations." He embraced NSC-68's call for disrupting and undermining the communist hold on the Eastern European bloc in part through the "improvement and intensification of intelligence activities."

The emphasis on covert methods, military force and propaganda seemed to some, as Wilson had labeled Republican programs of his day, to be "reactionary." America had been founded on a rejection of old world practices and ideals; many of the so-called "new trends" in American foreign policy could actually be viewed as regressions to a pre-revolutionary state. Tolerating moderated forms of European imperialism for the sake of European power, making intelligence gathering an institutionalized part of our government, concerning ourselves with the balance of power, and resigning ourselves to a military buildup for the foreseeable future: All of these things made the continuing progression of our democratic ideals difficult.

As Wilson had realized, it was difficult to take on the problems of others *as our own* without changing our definition of *our own*. One of the reasons Wilson was able to bring America through World War I with its identity largely unscathed was that he vastly reduced America's involvement in the world at the end of the war. (Although he favored the United States' participation in the League of Nations, he was eager to discard the accoutrements of "power-politics" which the war had forced on us.) The internationalism he envisioned stemmed more from normal peacetime pursuits—trade, travel and communications—than from what he perceived to be wartime pursuits—military buildups,

alliance-forming and geopolitical strategizing. Truman indeed had his work cut out for him as he attempted to “win” the Cold War while also upholding Wilsonian internationalism as a great American ideal; our original ideals were less likely to clash with global interaction and economic expansion than they were to clash with geopolitical maneuvering and military growth.

Truman’s speeches in the 1950s are a constant attempt to tie the “necessary” goals of American foreign policy to the “desirable” ones. For example, while viewing the unified force of free nations as essential for counteracting the Soviet threat, he also held out the hope that our alliances might someday give way to the kind of unity Wilson had envisioned. Of the counteroffensive to the invasion of South Korea, Truman maintained:

Such measures are necessary to meet the present threat of aggression. But we cannot admit that mankind must suffer forever under the burden of armaments and the tensions of greatly enlarged defense programs. We must try in every way not only to settle differences peaceably but also to lighten the load of defense preparations. In this task the United Nations is the most important if not the only avenue of progress. . . . We can win peace only by continuing to work for international justice and morality through the United Nations.<sup>5</sup>

Truman insisted that if the American mission was more difficult in the 1950s, it was also more essential. It was imperative that the difficulties not be allowed to become impediments, that we not lose sight of our overall goals.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that if, in the 1940s, the United States “stood for” freedom everywhere, in the 1950s the United States “worked for” freedom everywhere. In this sense, both the mission and the power of the United States were enhanced. America’s long-term goal remained political liberty for as many as possible, even though American influence was often seen as a prelude and even a prerequisite to “liberation.” If, in the 1940s, universalistic declarations such as the following accurately described the standards underlying U.S. foreign policy but exaggerated the actual scope, in the 1950s such declarations accurately described the scope of U.S. foreign policy, but downplayed the extent to which the Cold War influenced our standards: “Our concept of freedom has deep religious roots. We come under a divine command to be concerned about the welfare of our neighbors, and to help one another. For all men are the servants of God, and no one has the right to mistreat his fellow men.”<sup>6</sup>

Truman’s words in a November 30, 1950 press conference were, seemingly, a more accurate depiction of the standards by which we now judged ourselves and others:

No matter how the immediate situation may develop, we must remember that the fighting in Korea is but one part of the tremendous struggle of our time—the struggle between freedom and Communist slavery. The struggle engages all our national life, all our in-

stitutions, and all our resources. For, the effort of the evil forces of communism to reach out and dominate the world confronts our nation and our civilization with the greatest challenge in our history.<sup>7</sup>

I say "seemingly" because it has been one of my intentions to show that American foreign policy cannot adequately be described or understood via the dichotomies of consensus versus change, liberalism versus conservatism or of idealism versus realism. Nor can it be understood in terms of that viewpoint which disregards these dichotomies and imposes on the entire history of American politics a single theme or idea. If we must use such categories, we must admit the following: At the end of his term, Truman was an idealist engaged in pragmatic geopolitics, a pragmatist determined to uphold and perpetuate Wilsonian ideals and a political liberal bent on conserving the best in American political traditions and American political thought. In a clear departure from Wilsonianism and from the American past, he bequeathed to us the ongoing legacy of containment, military growth and the global expansion of our interests. But he bequeathed to us much more. His ideas remind us of certain points about the American foreign policy tradition which the above-mentioned categories allow us to forget.

First, there is a deep and abiding moralism in the American worldview. It is based on a belief in the dignity of the individual, and in the individual's right to govern himself or herself. It is underlain by a belief that the good impulses of human beings are more powerful than the bad. In spite of the pragmatic tendencies which, some claim, have dominated all of American politics, and in spite of institutionalized checks and balances in American government, there is an underlying axiom: Each person is so worthy that not only is it not any person's or nation's "right" to dominate another; it is "not right" for any person or nation to dominate another.

Second, there is the belief that real power not only should reside, but *does* reside with the people. Recurring throughout our history is the idea that evil men and evil governments are doomed to failure; that leaders who do not take the peoples' wishes into account will inevitably suffer from the lack of energy, creativity and resolve of their citizens, if not from actual rebellion. Freedom, in this view, is a driving and motivating force.

Third, there is the belief that, as an inherent privilege and opportunity of the human condition, freedom comes with obligations; it must be underlain by spiritual and moral principles and moderate political precepts lest it lead to chaos and war. The "will to power," actuated in the terrible cruelties of the twentieth century, was deterministic, collectivist and immoral. It bore little resemblance to the American understanding of freedom, but spoke volumes about the obstacles with which the "American tradition" was faced.

Truman faced those obstacles head-on and realized what was at stake. It was thus that Truman's most avid departure from Wilsonianism—his plunge into global geopolitics and his rapid buildup of the military power of the free



world—was saturated with Wilsonianism. His foreign policy formulations were underlain by the recognition the American tradition was *threatened*, and by the belief that the American tradition was *inherently strong*; by the conviction that even though it faced imperialism, fascism, bolshevism and relativism, freedom was on the march; and, by the surety that democracy is the most beneficial and lasting political form. Truman's anti-Soviet strategy was underlain not just by security concerns, but by a Wilsonian *faith* that democratic societies and peoples were destined for greatness and by a Wilsonian *determination* to fulfill that destiny. The real end of his foreign policy remained the maximization of the realm of freedom—freedom in as many places and for as many people as possible; and that end always influenced the means.

Although Truman knew that divisive strategic policies such as he designed were something Wilson had hoped to avoid, he continued to see the United States' leadership of the free world as the partial fulfillment of Wilson's dreams. In the introduction to this chapter, we listened as Truman praised the "courage and decisiveness" with which his own administration had "moved against the Communist threat." Now listen to a prescient, forward-looking part of that Farewell Address:

As the free world grows stronger, more united, more attractive to men on both sides of the Iron Curtain—and as Soviet hopes for easy expansion are blocked—then there will have to come a time of change in the Soviet world. Nobody can say for sure when that is going to be, or exactly how it will come about, whether by revolution, or trouble in the satellite states, or by a change inside the Kremlin. Whether the Communist rulers shift their policies of their own free will—or whether the change comes about in some other way—I have no doubt in the world that a change will occur. I have a deep and abiding faith in the destiny of free men. With patience and courage, we shall some day move on into a new era—a wonderful golden age—an age when we can use the peaceful tools that science has forged for us to do away with poverty and human misery everywhere on earth.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1980s, those changes did occur throughout most of the communist world, and both the strength and the allure of the non-communist world *were* significant factors. Truman's two greatest legacies—of containment and of internationalism—have great meaning for us today.

It seems safe to say that Truman's greatest gift to us and to those still struggling for freedom is this: He was never willing to view those two aspects of his foreign policy—the internationalist and the geopolitical—as separate but, like Wilson, taught that our power had to be part of our mission. Refusing to define containment in merely negative and reactive terms, he insisted on defining it as part of a larger American tradition, rooted in the American past. When Truman argued that the rights and struggles of all peoples transcended the superficial divisions of the Cold War, he suggested that we could never "win" that war

through strength alone. The only true victory, the only one that would have the blessing of the people and the stability which comes from the people's satisfaction, was a victory of individual rights and moral truths over oppression and wrongdoing.

I would go so far as to posit that Truman's intelligently construed version of Wilsonianism is our best hope today. Intricately thought-out, principled, sensible and successful, it lacks the shortcomings of the policies of many of his successors. Nixon's, Ford's and Kissinger's realpolitik approaches, Carter's human rights approach, Clinton's opportunistic and relativist approach, and the "We'll become involved if it's in our interest" approach which rears its head on both sides of the political aisle—all fall short of the approach of Truman. They lack the depth of his understanding of our mission and our power.

The architects of Détente responded to the heated aftermath of Vietnam with a realpolitik approach designed to give the world a cooling-off period. "Engagement" with the Soviet Union, nuclear arms reductions and the easing of relations with China were hallmarks of their foreign policy. American principles and universal rights were downplayed in favor of Kissinger's cautiously constructed treaties and balance-of-power tactics. In the meantime, the communist elites seized power all over Indochina with utterly brutal programs of social engineering. As the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia inflicted its atrocities, American leaders said little. Testimony to Truman's understanding that our principles had to maintain the offensive in the Cold War, America's reputation in the world continued its downward slide. On the world stage, American imperialism was the focus.

President Carter rejected Détente on the grounds that it downplayed human rights. In a speech entitled "A Foreign Policy Based on America's Essential Character," he declared, "We can no longer separate the traditional issues of war and peace from the new global questions of justice, equity, and human rights. It is a new world that calls for a new American foreign policy—a policy based on constant decency in its values and on optimism in our historical vision." Like Wilson, he especially hoped to deflate the anti-American arguments of the communists by speaking out for people oppressed by *right-wing* governments. But he went too far in dismantling containment in order to prove our commitment to justice and peace. Carter's disparagement of the postwar power structure and of NATO certainly did nothing to strengthen the unity of democratic states, and only encouraged the Soviets toward territorial aggrandizement. According to what Carter himself says in *Keeping Faith*, in negotiating the SALT II treaty he proposed his ultimate goals to the Soviets at the outset, with little attempt at bargaining. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, Carter was forced to reassess his approach. Like Truman, as leader of the Free World, he realized that *Soviet* power was our biggest obstacle.

Reagan's revival of containment, combined with his "Evil Empire speech," revealed a Truman-like determination to enhance freedom's realm, and to stymie

the Soviet threat. The Soviet Union had indeed consolidated an "empire," and held it together by means of force, the suppression of political and social liberties and the financial sponsorship of countries and individuals committed to its perpetuation. Even as he constructed a strategy to isolate the Soviet Union, Reagan insisted that our democratic principles were what distinguished us and made our power important. Like Truman, he passionately promoted those principles in his speeches; he knew full well that exposing the lack of scruples in Soviet practices could only enhance American power. At the same time, like Truman, he realized that in order to be effective, our national security policy should not overextend our troops or resources. Moreover, he too believed that our democratic principles placed restrictions on the use of power to promote democracy. (It was in Nicaragua, where he took those restrictions less seriously, that Reagan got into political trouble.)

Neither geopolitics divorced of attention to principle nor advocacy of human rights divorced of attention to the importance of *American* power and ideals represents the best in our political tradition. The American mission as Truman understood it comes between these approaches in saying that merely selfish goals are wrong, but that relativist thinking is wrong also. Both forget that the democratic way of life, and the respect for individual liberty and national sovereignty that it implies, is still our best hope. They forget the "universal rights of man."

The new globalism defined in economic terms, the new anti-globalism defined in anti-capitalist terms, the new nationalism defined in ethnocentric terms, and the new multiculturalism defined in terms of group politics all betray a narrow-minded selfishness and a forsaking of our original principles: trends Truman warned us to avoid. Adherents of these approaches forget that it is never just power or prestige of certain economic or political *groups* that matters, but the inherent rights of all individuals.

Truman understood that group politics, whether imposed within nations or whether exerted on other nations through force, leads to oppression and injustice. In Hitler's and Stalin's atrocities, he saw the horrible reality of group thinking taken to extremes. As the examples of Germany and Japan showed, "self-determination" easily became the excuse for aggressive nationalism. Between the wars, Eastern European nationalities and ethnic groups sought to determine their destinies by dominating and exploiting others. Before, during and after the war, the "powers" exploited those ethnic rivalries in order to gain the upper hand. Recent events in the Balkans prove the cataclysmic results of ethnic rivalries that have run amok.

The Taliban provide us with more deadly evidence of the perils of group thinking. In their view, the rights and the lives of other groups can be discarded so long as their righteous group prevails. In an article entitled "Are Human Rights Universal?" (written *before* September 11, 2001), Thomas Franck makes a cogent connection between the Taliban and others who define politics in terms of group authority instead of individual rights: "In taking a stand against global human rights, the Taliban have made common cause not with tired nationalist

defenders of state sovereignty, but with a powerful and growing subset of cultural exceptionalists. These include some traditional indigenous tribes, theocratic national regimes, fundamentalists of many religions, and surprisingly, a mixed bag of Western intellectuals who deplore the emphasis placed by modern human rights rhetoric on individual autonomy."<sup>9</sup>

Truman would not have liked the modern concept of "cultural identity," either as it plays out on the international scene, or as it plays out in domestic life. In both arenas, the inherent rights of individuals are disparaged in favor of the interests of particular groups. In America, this concept contributes to our fragmentation, and to our sense of uprootedness. It takes the ground out from under the people it claims to defend by implying that the ground they are standing on is *not theirs*. It belongs to some *other*—that is, the affluent, white American male. It encourages them to identify with the culture of their ancestors—*who lived elsewhere*. They are urged to appreciate their native culture (*located elsewhere*). They are taught that "American culture" can't understand each group's calling to fulfillment. Rather than being encouraged to expect (and demand) that America live up to its promise of equal rights for all, they are asked to identify with their "cultural roots," the implication being that any roots worth having are non-American ones.

When the ethnocentric terrorists attacked America, many reassessed this popular definition of culture. Perhaps the idea of the melting pot had not been so bad after all, for it is only when individuals find common ground in universal rights that pluralism and mutual respect come together. The American tradition is no threat to diversity so long as it stays firmly grounded in the belief that *every person* has inalienable political rights and that it is *no person's* right to violate the rights of another. Like it or not, our greatest recourse against degeneration into interest groups with nowhere to go but apart is our mutual assimilation to the principle of liberty, equality and justice *for all*.

Truman realized that nationalism and self-determination had to be reoriented away from a tribal, ethnic orientation and toward the idea of consent as it related to each nation's internal and external politics. (The ideas of self-determination and consent had to be tightly intertwined). And *this* was best done by promoting the rights of individuals to freedom from oppression by their own governments and the right of nations to freedom from domination by outside powers. Nationalism and self-determination could no longer mean the right of cultural or nationalist groups to forcefully unite with their cultural compatriots, nor to aggressively determine their national destiny. It had to include respect for diversity properly understood.

I say "properly understood" because the modern understanding of diversity is often a guise for cultural exceptionalism. Frequently, it is a code-word for anti-Americanism and for moral relativism; it is underlain by the assumption that, since there is no truth, no culture can claim to have a better understanding of the political good than another—but this means that all cultural assertiveness is valid. Again, recent events render such presuppositions absurd, for whether

it is the Chinese, Serbian, Iraqi or Taliban forces asserting their will to power, no human beings want their children, spouses or parents imprisoned, tortured and terrorized, treated as less than human for the sake of a political cause.

Truman had little use for moral relativism. He stood for America's unique kind of openness, not for the openness of today which causes us to disparage and ignore Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln, and to believe that we can learn no more from them than we could from any other political leaders in any other time and place. American openness, to Truman, did not mean "anything goes"; it could not be allowed to degenerate into randomness. Neither the narrow pursuit of our interests nor our openness to other cultures could overshadow the *universal significance* of our principles. Respect for those principles as they relate to both domestic and foreign policies would be the world's greatest opportunity for peace.

Truman knew, however, that "democratization" as a self-sufficient foreign policy goal, without regard for the complexities, would not work. Our democracy was a carefully crafted republic which depended as much upon checks and balances as it did upon the popular vote. Free elections, Truman realized, did not automatically translate into political freedom. Still, he might have been surprised to see just how disruptive some elections would be. In an important article, Amy Chua observes that we have led some countries to elections, only to discover that an oppressive demagogue is chosen by appealing to the resentment and hostility of one group, often the poor and disadvantaged, toward another more prosperous group, or of "insiders" toward foreigners. In the non-Western world, Chua argues,

Because markets and democracy benefit different ethnic groups in such societies, the pursuit of free-market democracy produces highly unstable and combustible conditions. Introducing democracy under such circumstances does not transform voters into open-minded citizens in a national community. Rather, the competition for votes fosters the emergence of demagogues who scapegoat the resented minority and foment active ethnonationalist movements demanding that the country's wealth and identity be returned to the "true owners of the nation."<sup>10</sup>

"Globalism" too pales in comparison with Truman's internationalism; it often means the narrow pursuit of financial interests and the whitewashing of political oppression. It emphasizes economic interaction and capitalist expansion, and deemphasizes democratic ideals. The recent bill granting China permanent normal trade relations with the United States is a perfect example. Some congresspersons *did* argue for a position *between* engagement and containment; they supported the trade measure but insisted that it be accompanied by "parallel legislation" that would address the security of the free world. Unfortunately, their sensible voices were largely ignored. The Senate pushed the trade bill through without serious consideration of the hard line which communist China has recently taken in political and military matters. Although the House passed

the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act, the Senate shoved this measure aside. In addition, the Senate toppled a bill which would have required the president to conduct annual reviews of China's proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missile technologies and advanced conventional weapons, and would have penalized China for violating non-proliferation treaties. As Truman foresaw, economic interaction and the free exchange of goods is a positive thing, *so long as* political and geopolitical concerns are also attended.

It should be noted that the anti-globalist movement is not the answer to the shortcomings of globalism. It turns out that this movement is more anti-capitalist than it is anti-globalist, and that the United States is usually its main antagonist. The International Forum on Globalization, a prominent anti-globalization group, recently proposed limiting corporate power and protecting labor and the environment in part by folding a wide range of regulatory responsibilities and powers into the United Nations. The anti-globalists seem willing to embrace international organizations and treaties so long as they advance the socialist cause.

Reflecting both the narrow economic concerns of globalism and the critique of America inherent in anti-globalism, under Clinton's watch, the United States backed steadily away from traditional national security procedures and from traditional American principles. President Clinton ignored weapons proliferation by communist countries, and, in his speeches, moved toward "moral equivalence" between democratic and socialist states. As an example, on his trip to China, he apologized for America's imperfect realization of universal rights, and praised the communist government for "reform." As Charles Kessler puts it, "The point at issue, however, was not how America had failed to live up to its principles, but whether those principles were worth living up to in the first place."<sup>11</sup> In addition, the president repeatedly made the point that the United States "does not support independence for Taiwan" or "two Chinas," or Taiwan's membership "in any international bodies whose members are sovereign states." Among the many Chinese dissidents expressing dismay at Clinton's remarks was Ye Ning, a human rights activist tortured by the Chinese government for his pro-democracy activities. He lamented, "Clinton has given the image to the world, especially to the Chinese people and opposition forces that the government of the United States strongly and unconditionally supports the Chinese mainstream communist leaders."<sup>12</sup>

The two weeks following the president's visit were described by a Hong Kong monitoring group "as one of the government's toughest crackdowns on democracy activists in recent years." As arrests and detentions escalated, freedom fighters struggled to hold onto their dreams. President Clinton was light-years away from President Truman, who sought with his very being to raise the morale of the free world.

Truman taught that our position as the most prosperous, powerful, democratic and beneficent nation on earth meant that we had to take our principles and our obligations *seriously*: We must recognize the tremendous impact of our

decisions and pronouncements, for our moral and geopolitical posture resonates with global implications. Our profitable economic interaction with the world should not cause us to ignore the cruel and dangerous misdeeds of governments and fanatical groups. Our superior military might should not tempt us to dismiss the unique aspirations of others, nor to forget that our power is *for* freedom. The fact that our country is so rigorously scrutinized and so often criticized means that our foreign policy must be *carefully* construed. On the other hand, we must not allow those who would benefit from our loss of power to lead us down a self-destructive path, toward an enervating complacency. The fact that our ideas have attracted so many and that our influence has so often been used for good means that we should study the past in order to discover the secret to our success. The American tradition, while imperfect, is vitally important. In a world where totalitarian ideas and schemes continue to percolate and to threaten liberty, there is no better recourse.

Like Wilson, Truman saw his awesome responsibility as president in terms of upholding, protecting and championing those democratic principles which, he rightly believed, were a challenge to *all* forms of political oppression and an inspiration to those desiring to be free. On January 7, 1953, just before he left office, Truman reiterated: "Our ultimate strength lies, not alone in arms, but in the sense of moral values and moral truths that give meaning and vitality to the purposes of free people. These values are our faith, our inspiration, the source of our strength and our indomitable determination."<sup>13</sup>

# Notes

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## INTRODUCTION

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7. Johnson, *Modern Times*, 695.
8. Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists Are Murdering Our Past* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 1996).
9. *Ibid.*, 227; emphasis in original.
10. *Ibid.*, 251.

## CHAPTER 1

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2. *Ibid.*
3. Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters*, 8 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1935), 4:242.
4. Woodrow Wilson, *Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, 4 vols., edited by Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1927), 1:76–77.



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6. Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 27.
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10. Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive Era* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 129.
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12. Ibid., 106.
13. For example, in 1913 he rejected U.S. participation in the six-power “financial reorganization” of China on the basis that it would impair China’s administrative independence.
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15. Ibid., 1:93.
16. George Will, *Statecraft as Soulcraft* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1983), 116–117.

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2. Ibid., 1:430.
3. Ibid., 1:437–438.
4. Ibid., 1:237.
5. Ibid., 1:57.
6. Ibid., 1:303–304.
7. Ibid., 1:60; emphasis added.
8. Ibid., 1:108.
9. Ibid., 1:202–203.
10. Ibid., 1:224–225.
11. Ibid., 2:181.
12. Ibid., 1:195.
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14. Ibid., 1:319.
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16. Ibid., 1:250.
17. Ibid., 1:303.
18. Edward M. House, *Intimate Papers*, 6 vols., ed. Charles Seymour (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928), 5:293.
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24. Wilson, *Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, 2:282.
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26. Ibid., 2:184.
27. Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century*, 288.
28. Wilson, *Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, 2:184.
29. Ibid., 2:198.
30. Ibid., 2:410.
31. Ibid., 2:408.
32. Baker, *Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters*, 5:8.
33. Ibid., 8.
34. Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson: A Brief Biography* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1963), ch. 4.
35. Wilson did not pressure the Allies regarding the war aims as a condition for full U.S. participation in the war, nor did he pressure them, during the war, to agree to a modification of their war aims as a condition for postwar economic assistance.
36. Baker, *Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters*, 5:215.
37. Ibid., 5:ch. 6.
38. Ibid., 5:308–312.
39. Ibid., 5:309.
40. Ibid., 6:127.
41. Ibid., 6:139.
42. Wilson, *Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, 2:186–187.
43. Ibid., 2:187.
44. Harley Notter, *The Origins of the Foreign Policy of Woodrow Wilson* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1937), 72–75.
45. Wilson, *Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, 2:346–347.
46. Ibid., 2:219.
47. Frederick Calhoun, *Power and Principle: Armed Intervention in Wilsonian Foreign Policy* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986), 250–267.
48. Wilson, *President Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, 2:97–98.
49. Baker, *Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters*, 6:366.
50. Lansing, *War Memoirs*, 178.
51. Ibid., 180.
52. House, *Intimate Papers*, 2:398.
53. Baker, *Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters*, 6:391–392.
54. Ibid., 6:392.
55. Wilson, *Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, 2:411.
56. Ibid., 2:414.
57. Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 114.
58. Ibid., 115.
59. House, *Intimate Papers*, 2:425.
60. Ibid., 2:439.
61. Wilson, *Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, 2:314.
62. Ibid., 2:323.

## CHAPTER 3

1. Wilson, *Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, 3:2.
2. Ibid., 3:3.

3. Ibid., 3:3–4; emphasis added.
4. Moderation is used here to mean the observation of reasonable limits and the avoidance of extreme political and social doctrines and measures. Prudence is used here to mean sound judgment influenced by caution and circumspection. When paired with the creeds of freedom and democracy, they indicate the attempt to live according to ideals without being “idealistic” in the pejorative sense.
5. Wilson, *Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, 3:11.
6. Ibid., 3:14.
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